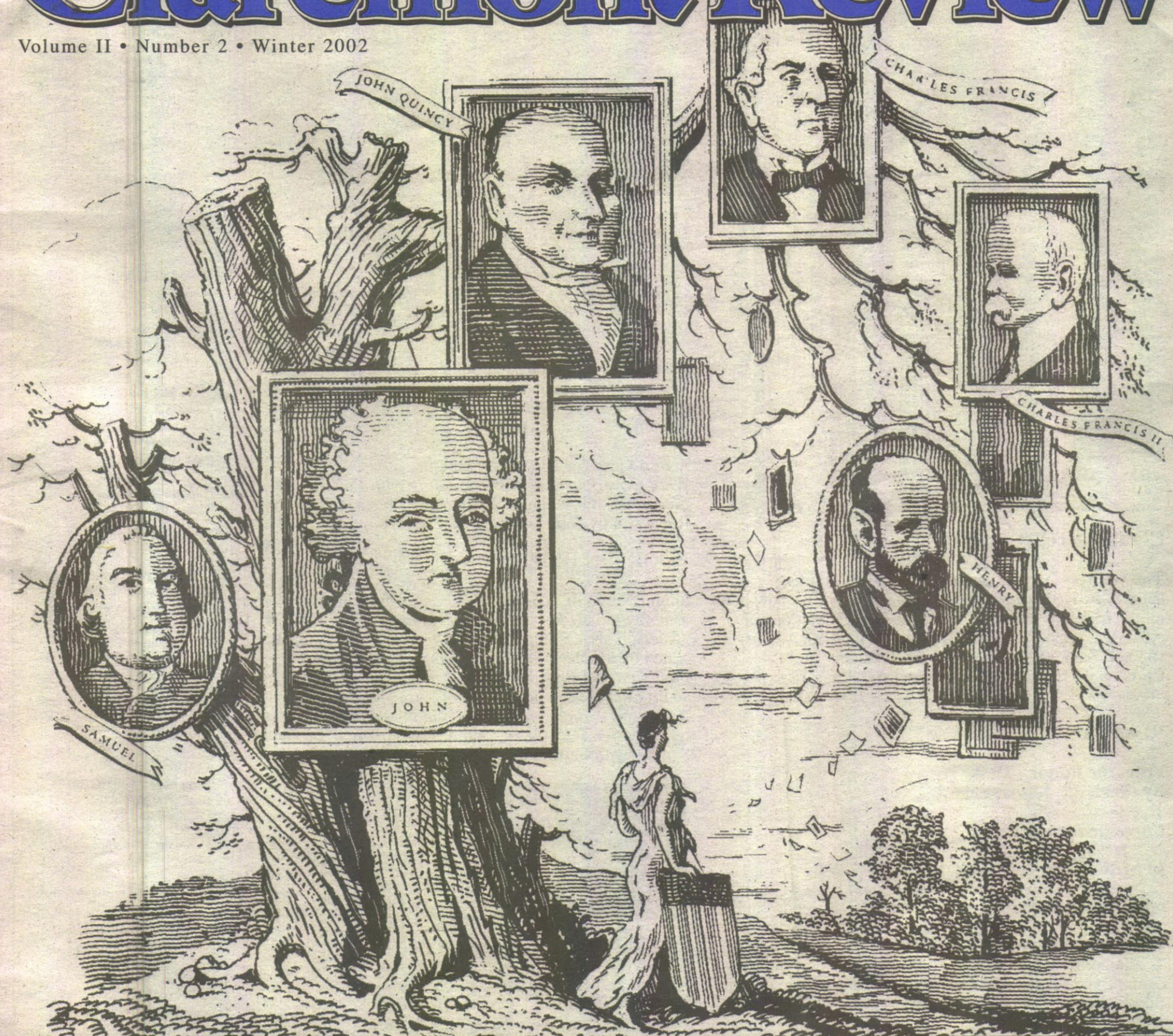


IN MEMORIAM: THOMAS B. SILVER—1947-2001

Claremont Review OF BOOKS

Volume II • Number 2 • Winter 2002

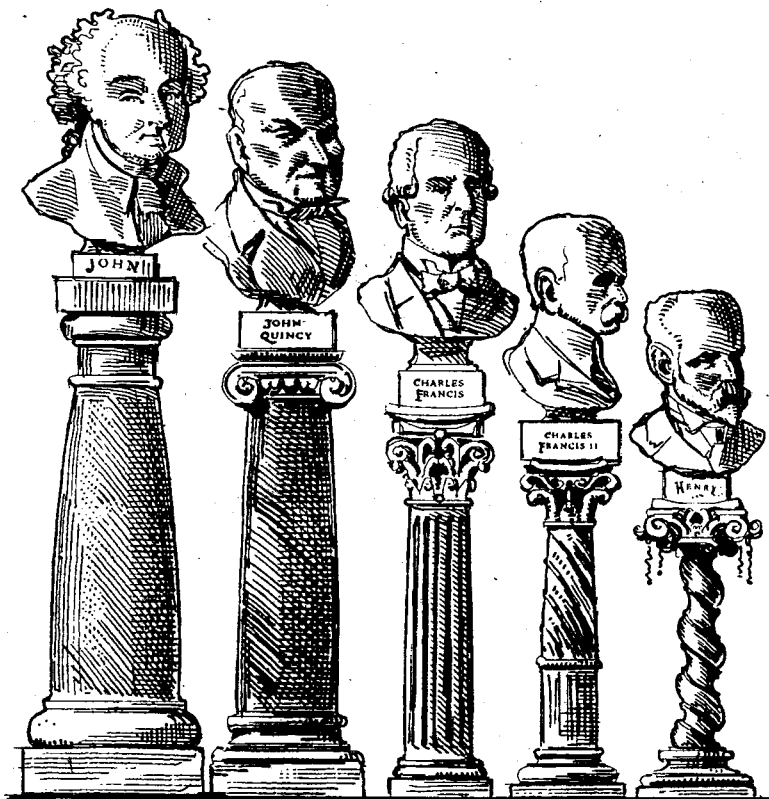


THE ADAMS FAMILY

The Genteel Decline of America's First Dynasty

Claremont Review OF BOOKS

Volume II • Number 2 • Winter 2002
A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship



COVER STORY

The Genteel Decline of America's First Dynasty

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Our Friend Tom

BY CHARLES R. KESLER

THE CLAREMONT REVIEW OF BOOKS HAS LOST ITS publisher, the Claremont Institute its president, and I have lost a dear friend. Tom Silver died the day after Christmas, at age 54, of an aggressive brain tumor that had been discovered less than a week before.

We first met in 1980, when I came to Claremont as a Publius Fellow to study the American political tradition and practice political journalism for six weeks in the summer. (Publius Fellowships were the first program of the Claremont Institute, and they continue to be awarded every summer.) At the impossibly young age of 33, Tom was the president of Public Research, Syndicated, the precursor organization to the Institute, created to distribute conservative op-eds to newspapers across the country. He was a debater, canny, patient, always looking several moves ahead; a mischievous wit, usually at his own expense, with a small laugh but a broad smile; a lover of wisdom, though he would never have called himself that, who pursued it widely, deeply, and in the least favorable circumstances.

And he was a friend among friends, engaged in an audacious common enterprise. His closest chums, his co-founders, pay their own tributes to him in this issue. They were students together, though not of the prevailing kind of political science, which Tom dismissed memorably: "Imagine yourself marooned on a desert island," he wrote, "with only ten books to read, but in this case books not of your own choosing. Suppose them all to be books written by behavioral political scientists during the past twenty years. Question: Do you think that you would die first of boredom, or of self-inflicted wounds?"

Those sentences introduced *Natural Right and Political Right*, the *festschrift* that he and Peter Schramm edited for their teacher Harry V. Jaffa in honor of his 65th birthday. Tom was always fascinated by turning points in history, and his studying with Jaffa certainly marked a turning point in his



own life, even as it did for his friends and fellow students at Claremont Graduate School. Jaffa introduced them to the serious study of books like the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Tom Sawyer*, and Churchill's *Marlborough*, "any one of which we gladly would have taken to a desert island in place of a whole library of our previous fare." Jaffa's conversation, Tom wrote, "more than that of any other teacher in our experience, sowed sparks in the minds of his students."

Tom was a conservative long before he got to Claremont, but like all those who studied here he became a new, actually a very old, kind of conservative. He was not a libertarian, though he knew all the libertarian arguments and was a devotee of Milton Friedman's monetarism. He was not a traditionalist, though he loved the American political tradition. Nor was he a neoconservative; he thought that America deserved three cheers, not two. There really was no word, no label, for his and his friends' kind of conservatism; there still isn't.

The Claremont Institute — and the *CRB* — stand for a conservatism so familiar that it is surprising, so innocuous that there is hardly anything more controversial. It might be called American conservatism, were that not already a generic term. Under Jaffa's tutelage, Tom learned that the Declaration of Independence had proclaimed the central idea of the American political tradition, and that this idea was true. The

idea was human equality, properly understood, which meant as ordained by nature and nature's God; an equality that promoted and in favorable circumstances required republican government; an equality not only consistent with but culminating in human excellence.

Since the dark days of the late 1970s, America has recovered some of her old self-confidence. Still, the new patriotism of the 1980s withered, and the new new patriotism engendered by September 11 will fade as well, if not planted in a better understanding of the rightness and goodness of American principles. Tom saw this with remarkable clarity. He studied why conservatism had failed to make much headway in the 20th century; why liberalism had been so successful.

His doctoral dissertation, published as *Coolidge and the Historians*, was a gem, a wry refutation of the lies, distortions, and partial (i.e., partisan) truths told by liberal historians about Calvin Coolidge. Those fables served to discredit the old America and to justify the new republic that Franklin D. Roosevelt had helped to initiate. Tom's second book, substantially complete at his death, extended his analysis of how liberalism, *nee* progressivism, had wrapped its coils around American politics. The *CRB* is proud to present an excerpt from *The Liberal Century: How Progressivism Transformed America*, in which Tom argues that conservatism, as presently constituted, alas, cannot defeat its liberal foe.

Tom believed that a reconstructed conservatism could and should be able to vanquish liberalism, assuming that Providence cooperated. In Tom's own case, God had other plans. Having spent eight years here before a long interlude in Los Angeles and California politics, Tom had come full circle, returning to the Claremont Institute as its president only 18 months ago. It was he, as president, who decided to launch the new *CRB*.

Our loves define us, in the end. Tom Silver loved his country, his friends, his family; and to his wife Nancy, his sons Arthur and Tony, and his parents and brothers and sister, we extend our deepest sympathy. He loved the play of a good argument, too, which we shall try to offer him plenty of in these pages — in loving memory of our friend.

CORRESPONDENCE

Self-Preservation, Rightly Understood

Dear Editor:

In "Those Hell Hounds Called Terrorists" (Fall 2001), Harvey Mansfield undertakes to "expound on the place of terror in the tradition of modern political thought in the West." The place of terror in the aforesaid thought arises, he says, from Hobbes founding a philosophy of rights on the timorous character of the multitude in a "state of nature." Locke, he says, "continued Hobbes's reliance on a fearful state of nature and the right of self-preservation." This preoccupation with physical self-preservation was an invitation to the seizure and maintenance of power by terror by the Committee of Public Safety in the French Revolution, a precedent followed by the Bolsheviks a century later. But Robespierre, and other leading Jacobins, did not look to Hobbes or Locke; they looked to Rousseau. It was Rousseau's doctrine of the General Will, by which everyone was bound, and by which dissenters would be "forced to be free," that supplied the theoretical foundation of the Terror. This doctrine had no counterpart in the American Revolution, which was mainly Lockean (as the Founders understood Locke). In the American Founding, majority rule was legitimate only within a boundary of minority rights, such as those set forth in our Bill of Rights.

Mansfield ends by invoking the authority of Edmund Burke, who stood for "the dominion of conscience over mind," and who combined the rights of conscience "with manly freedom which replaces the right of self-preservation and promises to keep democracy powerful and brave." Burke was as much an admirer of the American Revolution as he

was an opponent of the French Revolution. No one represented manly freedom, or the dominion of conscience, better than George Washington. But Washington and his Revolutionary cohorts did not replace the right of self-preservation with manly freedom, they believed that self-preservation rightly understood issued in manly freedom.

Harry V. Jaffa
Distinguished Fellow
The Claremont Institute
Claremont, CA

Bringing Order to Chaos

Dear Editor:

In his optimistic review of five policy areas positively affected by "The Return of Public Seriousness" (Fall 2001), Andrew Busch is badly amiss on two counts. He rushes to say that "After September 11, it is hard to argue that society is safer as long as law-abiding citizens are disarmed." Hardly. The fact that "the airliners were vulnerable precisely because the terrorists, though vastly outnumbered, were the only armed people on the plane," in itself, proves rather the need for trained air marshals to patrol the skies as our police patrol the ground. Civil society needs order, not cowboys.

After several astute points, the essay closes with a wayward snipe at term limits, saying that "The travails of New York City, forced by term limits to surrender the services of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani at its moment of maximum need, must cast serious doubt on" the idea of

term limits. Mr. Busch would do well to recall Thomas Jefferson's example in 1808. A dangerous war with Great Britain was approaching and Jefferson was encouraged to think that his personal leadership in the form of a third presidential term was indispensable in such a crisis. Yet, Jefferson, a stalwart of free government, would not presume any one man to be greater than that very system of government. George Washington's example of two terms in office would continue until Roosevelt's fit of hubris during World War II. Notwithstanding the title of a recent Giuliani biography, New York does not need an emperor.

R. William Eubanks, Esq.
Riverdale, NY

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Or via electronic mail at crbedit@aol.com. The best letters are short. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Please include an address and telephone number for verification. No pseudonyms, please. Anonymous letters will be mocked and discarded.



Thomas B. Silver, { 1947-2001 }

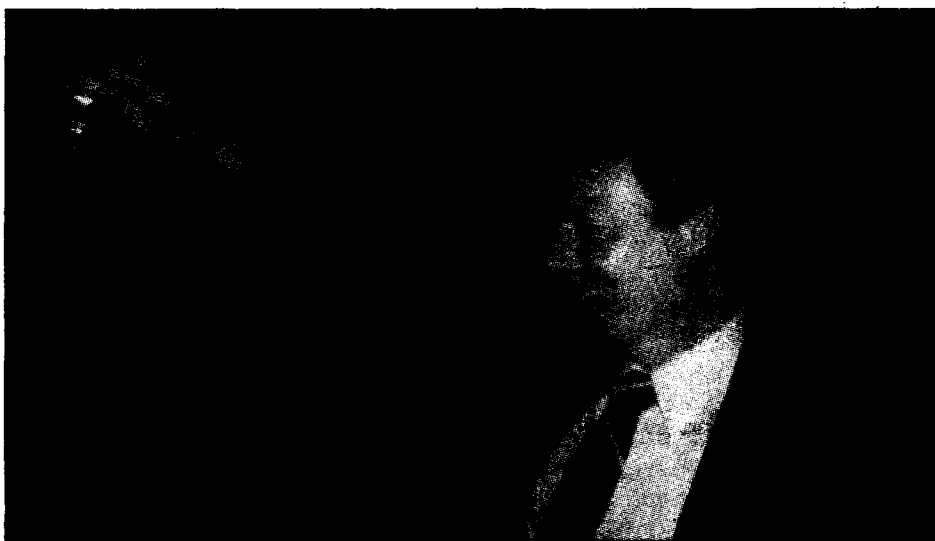
Tom Silver always spoke well but rarely spoke about himself. In his first book, *Coolidge and the Historians*, it is easy to see his character. It is also easy to see why in 1983 President Reagan counted the book among his favorites. In its pages, Tom defends Calvin Coolidge against ungenerous, untrue attacks unleashed by big-name historians such as Arthur Schlesinger in the decades following Coolidge's presidency, when Progressives overtook American politics.

Tom rights a wrong in that book, and teaches us what a great American statesman says and does. He followed in the spirit of Coolidge, who said: "A wholesome regard for the memory of the great men of long ago is the best assurance to a people of a continuation of great men to come, who shall be able to instruct, to lead, and to inspire. A people who worship at the shrine of true greatness will themselves be truly great."

Coolidge also said we Americans have been characterized by a resolve "to show by our actions our adherence to those seasoned and established principles which have made our country the greatest among the nations of the earth."

From his days serving in Vietnam and serving as chief of staff to Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich, to his days serving as co-founder, board member, and then president of the Claremont Institute and publisher of this journal, Tom was of good character, of American character, showing by his actions his adherence to the principles that made America great. Tom leaves behind him Nancy, his wife of 25 years, and two sons, Arthur and Tony. They have lost a constant and loving husband and father. America has lost a patriot-scholar.

As a tribute to Tom Silver, we invited some of the co-founders of the Claremont Institute to offer a few reflections on their friend and comrade.



'He was the best of us.'

LARRY P. ARNN

ONCE WE WERE PLAYING BASKETBALL, in the spring of 1975. We graduate students had discovered that the advanced study of political philosophy requires lots of basketball. It was a beautiful day. Our blood was up. We were making memories of the kind that we rehearse to this day.

Tom Silver announced he was going home. "Why?" we hassled him. He said he had to go to the library. "Why?" we pressed. "There are no papers due." He was a graduate student, he replied, and must spend *six-hours each day* in the library. We respected Tom for this. Also, we thought he was weird. Also, we thought he was the best of us.

I for one am deficient both in space and in ability to give a rounded account of the character and achievements of Tom Silver. If I had them both, I would begin with the virtue of moderation. Tom had

self-control to as great an extent as I have seen it in any man. He was the last to speak, but was somehow also the quickest. Beneath his self-control were powerful forces — the other virtues — held in check and permitted to display themselves only in the right time and the right way.

Many times Tom and I and a few others had long talks about the future and what we must do. A very few times I heard him use the expression "When we get our chance." He meant a lot by this. He meant when we got a chance to do what Calvin Coolidge did, to help to put things right. This you might call an unguarded statement, but it was not. It was just what he meant. A high and quiet hope. I myself believed it would happen — believed his ambitions were reachable — because he governed them so strictly. He wrote of Coolidge and the

Boston Police Strike that Coolidge waited until everyone else had tried and failed. Only then did he step in, and resolve the crisis — which made it possible for him to eventually become President of the United States. Something similar was, quietly, Tom's plan for his life and for all our lives.

Tom was courageous. We did not get to see him fight in Vietnam, and he would not speak of his time there except to make light of it. But he was brave. We know that from little things he said that he was under fire. But then we often saw him under fire, when things were tough, and he had the moral courage that goes with and transcends the physical. I cannot remember anything he ever said that was not cool and considered, precise and deliberate.

Tom was just. Why did we trust him?

Because he never gave himself anything he did not deserve. I cannot recall him praising himself, or claiming more than his due.

Tom possessed prudence of a kind that reaches up to wisdom. His understanding was in proportion, restrained, bounded where it needed to be. He loved his wife Nancy, and his sons Arthur and Tony first. But he also loved battles and crises and fierce arguments and turning points in history.

For several years, I pushed Tom — you could push Tom, and if he moved, you knew you were pushing in the right direction — to write his sequel to *Coolidge and the Historians*. One morning the book arrived as an attachment in my e-mail. He had written it on the train on the way to and from work, and also late at night. Like his first book it is concise, tight, and authoritative. The fact

that this superb diligence, moderation, and thinking power has been cut off so young is, of course, one of the worst things that could happen to any of us.

I shall miss most about Tom the chance to talk things through with him. He was one of those people to whom you put things as well and honorably as you could, because though he might not say so, he would know if you did not. For this deep reason his passing leaves me, and all his friends, diminished.

Larry P. Arnn is president of Hillsdale College in Michigan and vice-chairman of the Claremont Institute's board of directors. He served as the Institute's president from 1985 until 2000. This article is adapted from remarks delivered at Tom Silver's memorial service on January 3, 2002 in Fullerton, California.

'He knew what was important.'

CHRISTOPHER FLANNERY

BY THE TIME I MET TOM, WHEN HE was in his early 20s, he was already a stalwart Socratic-American. I mean that, even at that young age, he considered it his high and pleasant duty to understand and to defend what was best, in itself, and in and for his friends and his country.

In the 30 years since, so far as I could tell, he never wavered in this ruling purpose. There was no uncertainty in him on this main point. He knew what was important, and he knew what was required of him. Because of this — it always seemed to me — there was no wasted motion in Tom's mind, no dithering or fumbling about; and there was at once a sweetness and a gravity in all he did. It goes without saying in these times, that being a man of reason and a patriot necessarily made him a staunch conservative.

Tom had the full courage of his convictions. A simple love of truth and fidelity to duty always drew him to seek out and understand the strongest arguments that might stand against him. In



philosophy and in politics, he sought to articulate the positions with which he disagreed as persuasively as they could be made by their wisest proponent. As to his own position, no one demanded from him more rigor in an argument than he demanded from himself. This could be unsettling to political or philosophical friends with more easy-going allegiances. But it did them, the honor

and the benefit of inviting them to think for themselves.

Tom did not go in for small talk — or big talk. Those who did not know him well could easily get the impression that he did not go in for talk at all! But he loved conversation as he loved language and pursuit of truth. He just had no need of display. He was one of the most self-sufficient men I have known. In the

many conversations and deliberations I was blessed to share with him over three decades, he generally spoke less and understood more than anyone in the room.

I never knew or heard of Tom doing anything unseemly, though in our student days we strove to give him many irresistible opportunities. Never to my knowledge was he anything but kind and considerate in his treatment of others. I never heard him raise his voice, and I never saw him lose his composure. It was impossible to get Tom to tell a stretch, even in a good cause, unless it was to protect the innocent. He just did not have it in him.

There was no presumption in Tom, no boastfulness and no diffidence either. He was never daunted by misfortune or carried away by success. He had a quiet, unshakable equanimity all his own — a poise of soul that kept him steady in all weathers. He met the world and everything in it on its merits, with benign and intelligent purpose, and he was utterly trustworthy.

It was an honor to be called friend by such a man.

Christopher Flannery is professor of political science at Azusa Pacific University in California and a co-founder of the Claremont Institute.

'We decided to stand against chaos.'

PETER SCHRAMM

TOM SILVER AND I ARRIVED AT Claremont Graduate School at the same time. It was the fall of 1971 and it was the time of shouting and marching and chanting. The '60s and its sequels had affected even this place of thinking. The left was loud and firm in its assertions that nothing was firm. The ground under American feet seemed to be shifting. It had become increasingly difficult to stand tall.

But there was red-haired Tom, seemingly unperturbed by the spinning events, standing straight-backed in the midst of fellow students. I entered the conversation first and only later found out his name. The issue being pursued had to do with a question raised by Plato's *Phaedo*: Was the soul immortal? Sides had already been taken and arguments were laid out. One fellow was talking only to impress, while another just wanted to prevail. Tom ignored the former and, turning to the lover of victory, he asked a piercing question.

It is typical of me that I do not remember what the question was. But I do remember the moment and the effect. The discussion was transformed. From that moment on the group was turned in the direction of clarity and knowledge. From the start, Tom exemplified both the courage and the moderation necessary to the study of political philosophy. And he revealed that he was a partisan of virtue.

The Silver effect was permanent. In the classroom he was a bit more circumspect and deferential. (The harshest thing he ever said about a teacher — who the rest of us were railing against — was this: "He doesn't want to spend a lot of time on the difficult questions, does he?") Outside on the lawns he was more forthcoming and pressing and allowed himself to laugh aloud a great deal. In our own seminars — each semester a few of us, and the numbers grew, read a book aloud and talked about it — he was at his best. He was now among friends and fellow explorers as we embraced



Homer and Shakespeare, Churchill and Lincoln. And to those of us who were inclined to push and shove an argument around, Tom was always there to show us how to think through the thing in a way that always appeared to be most wise and prudent.

We made life swing. Everything was open and contestable and fun. We seamlessly went from Being to consent to equality to beauty and back to basketball (the rudiments of which I was forced to learn, just to spend more time with my friends). What is the connection between natural right and natural rights? Were the old men sitting on the walls of Troy right — as they gazed upon Helen passing — that it was all worth it? Was Harry Jaffa's latest letter really necessary? Can reason move without wonder? We even argued about Greek grammar.

But the confusing political world was there, too. Events continued to whirl and statesmen were not forthcoming. By the time Jimmy Carter became president, we were persuaded that we had learned a thing or two about where the country was heading and began ever more seriously to look into the cause of things. What struck us above all else was that the banal liberal voices couldn't defend themselves from the nihilistic onslaught of the New Left, and that there was no comprehensive counterattack from those who called

themselves conservatives. It was not enough to talk of policies and programs. We had to get to the heart of things.

Carter asked citizens to find a few nice things to say about America, but his disposition revealed the hopelessness he felt and, unwittingly, conveyed to the people. The President of the United States could not give an accounting of the regime's virtues and he couldn't recognize tyranny until the monster bit. The president himself was caught in the spiral. The ancient creed itself — the massive fact of the American idea — seemed to be teetering.

We decided to stand against chaos. "Malaise" was not a word that should have a home here. The circumstances called for political action, but not the ordinary sort. We had decided not to run for public office. We decided to think in public, and to influence the public. We had learned from Lincoln that in this regime public opinion was everything; whoever molds public sentiment, in the end, makes the laws and all other good things possible.

We needed to explain to our fellow citizens both what we once were and what we may yet become. We were confident that the character of the people was essentially sound, that they only needed reminding of the things for which the country stood. They needed to hear again the arguments and the drum beat of the

American Revolution and the statesmanship that made it possible.

The ground under our feet was to be made solid and firm. The words and the language of our ancient faith had to be reconstructed, and the signs and manners that went with them.

And so we schemed and plotted and sacrificed. We took jobs — teaching or pumping gas — only as a means to that end. Our families learned to live with lean years. This band of friends needed an organization, a structure. We incorporated as The Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy, bought used typewriters and wrote and talked and persuaded. We pulled people into our orbit. We raised some money, published in obscure newspapers, talked to humble clubs.

In laying down the argument of America's Founders and attempting to recover their purposes, we aimed to remind citizens of the peaks of human excellence, of the nature of self-government, of the conditions of freedom itself. The good at the heart of our country had to be revealed and re-animated. In doing so we ceaselessly attacked the enemies of freedom, root and branch. No one was better in doing this than Tom Silver. He laid out the heart of the Progressive movement (and hence of modern liberalism) better than anyone, and he made great advances against the post-liberal nihilists, the loudest of the shouters.

Whether or not we have proven or shall prove successful is for others to judge. But I will say that all these three decades of effort to prove a proposition true could not have been done without Tom Silver, this Tom Sawyer-like fellow who never faltered, never stopped reading, never relinquished hope, and never stopped thinking and persuading. He was a fine American man, this soldier, this citizen, this friend. I will now have to reconstruct the argument about the immortality of the soul with what friends are left, and it will be more difficult.

Peter Schramm is professor of political science and director of the Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs at Ashland University in Ohio. He served as president of the Claremont Institute from 1979 until 1985.

A CENTURY HAS NOT DIMINISHED the hold of progressive ideas on the American mind. In the years before World War I, known as the Progressive Era, philosophers, academics and intellectuals like John Dewey, William James, Charles Beard, Walter Lippmann, and Herbert Croly set out to transform America's self-understanding. They sapped and shattered — and then rebuilt — America's original foundation, the work of our Founding Fathers. At the beginning of the 21st century, we are ever more firmly in the grip of their powerful ideas, still standing on the new foundation they built.

The 20th century, in terms of the American political tradition, was rhythmic, calling to mind the cyclical interpretation set forth by Arthur M. Schlesinger and later carried forward by his son, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. The first 20 years of the 20th century — the decades of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson — constituted the first of three progressive waves that would dominate American politics for 100 years. They were followed by the 1920s, a decade of conservatism under Republican Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Then came the second wave of progressivism, 20 years of the New Deal and the Fair Deal, beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt and ending with Harry Truman. They were followed by the 1950s, another decade of conservatism under President Eisenhower. A third 20-year wave of progressivism began with John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier, continued through the Great Society with Lyndon Johnson, and finally petered out with Jimmy Carter. Ronald Reagan was the leading political figure of the 1980s, but Reagan, like Coolidge and Eisenhower before him, lived to see the Democratic Party back in the White House.

There is an obvious logic to the progressive dynamic. So long as there is no realistic prospect of dismantling the administrative state whose foundations were laid by Wilson and built upon by the New Deal and the Great Society, the movement of history must be in a progressive direction. Every major conservative political victory becomes a victory for the status quo; every major liberal political victory becomes an opportunity for another step forward. Progressives are always just one electoral victory away from resuming the forward march of history.

A powerful reason for the current state of affairs is that, at the deepest level, progressivism long ago won the battle of ideas with conservatism. Certainly this was part of FDR's grander purpose in 1936. That election overwhelmingly ratified the New Deal. His objective was not just to win an immediate political victory but to interpret that victory for succeeding generations.

The mandate of 1936 remains intact; it has not been overturned by a later critical election. Reagan's counterattack against the New Deal, always fiercer in its rhetoric than in its actions, never came close to undoing

Exclusive Excerpt: *The Liberal Century*

Why Conservatives Lost the Battle of Ideas

BY THOMAS B. SILVER

what Roosevelt set out to do — namely, to enlarge public power, partly as a corrective to private social and economic inequities, partly as a means of accomplishing great public purposes.

Reagan rode into Washington on a white horse, promising to decapitate government spending, slash taxes, and slay the great dragon bureaucracies. He did not fulfill those promises. The federal tax bite in 1999 was at its highest peacetime level in history: 20.7% of GDP. Taxation by government at all levels — two decades after Reagan's first inauguration — was 35.7 cents for every dollar taxpayers earned, a record high. This is not to say that Reagan accomplished nothing of his agenda; it is to say he failed to break the hegemony of the New Deal. From our vantage point more than 20 years after Reagan took office, it is evident that the man who would overthrow the New Deal rode into Washington as St. George and rode out as Don Quixote.

Still, is there not a body of academic scholarship in place that has refuted progressive thought and that will, over time, have an increasingly large political effect?

Certainly the most successful area of conservative scholarship has been in economics. A generation of free-market economists has added immensely to our understanding of how markets work, and has undermined much of the Keynesian rationale for the fiscal and monetary policies of the New Deal and its successors. But economics is an instrumental discipline; its sphere is the study of means, not of ends. Progressivism was — and is — at its deepest level a teaching about human and political ends. The successes of free-market economics, to the extent that they are broadly convincing, can be assimilated, sometimes easily, into the pragmatic framework of American progressivism or liberalism.

IT BECAME CLEAR DURING THE 1970s, FOR example, that various government regulations were, in fact, harmful to the people they were supposed to check. President Carter and other liberals had no trouble supporting deregulation in certain areas. And if a steady monetary policy, like the one conducted from 1987 to 1997 by a free-market disciple of Ayn Rand, can be shown to produce sound results, it was no violation of his liberalism for President Clinton to embrace it, as he did.

Free-market economists have not overthrown progressivism, finally, because conservatives do not all agree that prosperity is

the key issue. Prosperity for what? It is precisely this question that divides the right and gives it the appearance of being nothing more than an alliance of convenience.

Consider those irascible yokefellows, the libertarians and the Christian Right. Many libertarians (not all) are Atheists and atheists, i.e., they deny the authority both of revelation and of reason in telling people how they should live. On this view, it supposedly follows that (a) human beings should be “free to choose” their own ends and lifestyles, and (b) that the government is best that gives its citizens the widest latitude to make such choices; in other words, that government is best that governs least (or, in some extreme versions of libertarianism, not at all).

A softer version of this libertarian argument (but leading to the same practical conclusion) is Agnosticism and agnosticism. This is not the flat denial of the authority of God or reason, but the more subtle claim that we simply don't know. As a practical matter, agnosticism collapses into atheism. If there is no objective right or wrong, then who is to tell someone else how to live his life? Everyone should have the absolute right to do as he pleases, so long as he accords everyone else the same right. Thus across a wide expanse of the libertarian Right, the absolute right that we have in our persons and property is regarded as a deduction from the relativism of all values. Obviously, it would not take a rocket scientist to drive a truck through this argument. It would take a truck driver.

For the Christian Right, the question of how to live is not open but closed. For this reason, liberals and libertarians both fear that the victory of the Christian Right would usher in something like the reign of Ayatollah Khomeini. And indeed, to the extent that they identify themselves as the Christian Right, do not religious conservatives point to the Bible as the source of their moral beliefs? Does this mean that their political agenda comes directly from biblical revelation? If so, how authoritative can it be for citizens in a constitutional democracy one of whose glories is the separation of church and state? How can the concern for morality or virtue be reconciled with freedom?

Into the motley camp of economic conservatives, libertarians, and religious conservatives come the traditionalists, or “original intent” conservatives. Their view is that on the fundamental issues of today we ought to be guided by the will of the American people — the American people, that is, who lived

200 years ago — as codified in the U.S. Constitution, until such time as the people themselves dictate a change in policy through the proper constitutional channels. But why should we be bound by what some people — people ignorant of our own circumstances — thought two centuries ago? What is old is not necessarily good. An argument is needed to connect the two.

In traditional societies, the old is identified with the good because the ancestral is divine: the ancestors, or the ancestors of the ancestors, were gods. One might place that in a modern context as follows: for Americans our “ancestral” faith is the creed expressed in the Declaration of Independence, whose principles are said to be derived from “the laws of Nature and of Nature's God.” The constitutional authority of the people, whether those living 200 years ago or those living today, is derived from, and limited by, something higher than the mere will of the people. Apparently, however, our “original intent,” conservatives would sooner have their tongues cut out than mention the “n”-word — *nature* — in the same breath with the Constitution.

Thus, their constitutionalism degenerates into conventionalism, and they find themselves in the awkward position of defending the old merely because it is old, which is no more plausible than defending the new merely because it is new.

WE BEGIN TO SEE HOW THE PERPLEXITIES of conservative thought contribute to the progressive hold on the American mind and why progressivism cannot be dislodged by mere policy studies, however many and however persuasive. Ronald Reagan understood this and unified the right through a patriotic rhetoric that harkened back to the Founders and to the “laws of Nature and of Nature's God.” Reagan's purpose was to accommodate moral, economic, and national security concerns within a single framework. The question, however, is this: is it possible to regard such rhetoric as anything more serious than mere rhetoric? Or is it not just a pretty papering over of fundamental difficulties, akin to hiding the fatal structural defects in a house by putting up colonial wallpaper? Reagan's rhetoric is exposed to one massive problem: most serious thinkers today, including many (if not most) on the right, no longer accept the idea of Nature articulated in the Declaration of Independence. The whole weight of modern science and philosophy has been brought against the idea of Nature as the universal ground of political obligation, valid for all human beings everywhere and always. Thus, it would appear to be profoundly reactionary to attempt to return in any serious way to the 18th century thought of the Founding Fathers.

Thomas B. Silver was publisher of the Claremont Review of Books. This article is adapted from his unpublished manuscript, *The Liberal Century: How Progressivism Transformed America*.

REVIEWS & ESSAYS

BY ANGELO M. CODEVILLA

Editor's note: This is the first of several occasional articles by Dr. Codevilla assessing the War on Terror, based on the policy prescriptions he detailed in "Victory: What It Will Take To Win," published in the Fall 2001 issue.

BY NEW YEAR'S DAY, AFGHANISTAN'S Taliban regime was history and the Bush Administration was basking in the aura of success. But auras are not realities — especially in war.

Were the victims of September 11 avenged? There is no evidence that anyone killed in Afghanistan had a role in the Sept. 11 attacks. Was America now safe from terrorism, or at least safer than it was? No one suggests that any significant proportion of the leaders or followers of anti-American terrorism were killed, or that hopes for their cause were defeated. So what exactly did sweeping away the Taliban do to bring America the peaceful security necessary to our way of life?

The proof that it did nothing is that success in Afghanistan coincided with intensification of the security measures that have darkened American life since September 11. Only the relaxation of the security measures' grip, a return to the habits of trust that had made America unique, would constitute victory. Would forthcoming operations in the "war on terrorism" trigger such a return? Alas, attempts to engage officials in the Bush Administration in such questions inevitably resemble a hospital dialogue:

Doctor: Good news. The operation was a complete success. We removed the targeted tissue using the latest and most advanced techniques medical science has to offer. We are planning several more operations, each designed for assurance of similar success.

Family: Great! Thanks! That means you are now taking the life-support tubes out of our patient, right? When will he be back to normal?

Doctor: The medical staff will discuss only the professional qualities of our procedures. New life-support tubes are going into him every day, and as we said, each successive operation is sure to be more successful than the previous one. You must have patience.

Family: Sure, but patience for what, and for how long? What do you mean by success? If the procedures are so successful, why more life support? Are you doing anything that would let him go home?

Doctor: We are making no plans at this time for the removal of life support. It is enough for us that our operations are related to his condition, and that they have high technical merits.

Family: What sense does that make? We've heard that you rejected or post-



Victory Watch I: Are We Winning Yet?

poned indefinitely some operations that some experts say would actually cure him. Why?

Doctor: They might or might not cure him. And they would be expensive.

Family: But money's no problem for us. Besides, your operations will keep him as a medical guinea pig indefinitely. Why not try the only ones that anyone argues will effect a cure?

Doctor: Well, you see, those measures would be disruptive to the medical profession. Doctors here and elsewhere would think badly of us for abandoning protocols most of us have followed for years. To do so would be to concede that we have not been very good doctors.

Family: Maybe you aren't.

What Happened in Afghanistan and What Did Not

After abandoning an embarrassing three-week effort to defeat the Taliban regime without handing a victory to their Northern Alliance foes, the U.S. government used modern communications and close air support to facilitate that victory. The Taliban ceased to exist. As predicted here, Afghans of all stripes eagerly killed or turned over to Americans the Arabs

who had bolstered the losing faction.

Many of the perhaps 2,000 Arabs who died in Afghanistan, and perhaps a few of the more numerous Afghans who died, were unfriendly to America. But because there is no evidence that anyone who died had anything to do with September 11, the Afghan campaign did not avenge America. Perhaps some of those who died might have harmed America had they lived. Hence America is much better off for their deaths. But these deaths did not shut off the pipeline of violent young men who believe that America is more contemptible than it is evil.

Whose deaths might have shut off this pipeline? Conceivably, killing Osama bin Laden in a way that would have discredited him might have helped. But the U.S. government did not find him, and would not have known how to discredit him if it had. Simply killing him would not have blunted his message: America may kill some servants of Allah's cause, but it cannot protect itself or defeat that cause. Bin Laden's claim that countless others would fill his place was no boast, while the U.S. claim that al-Qaeda was the proximate cause of anti-American terrorism was belied by the U.S. "homeland security"

measures, which waxed even as al-Qaeda waned.

What Happened to Osama bin Laden?

When it became clear last November that the Taliban would be defeated, it also became clear that if bin Laden remained in Afghanistan, he would end up in American hands. Since America would destroy any other regime that harbored him, he became a deadly liability to any host. In American hands alive, he might have implicated anyone who had ever associated with him — especially governments whose purposes he had served. In American hands as a dead trophy, he would be a liability to his cause. But if he was never found, he would serve his cause as a living legend. More important, those governments who had succored him knew that obliging the Americans to continue searching for him would deflect America's ire from themselves. And in fact those Americans who successfully argued against attacking Iraq also cited the continuing need to search for bin Laden. Because bin Laden is worth more to his associates dead than alive, it is a safe bet that he died at their hands and will never be found. Take a lesson from *The Godfather Part II*: Don't bother looking for the assassins. Those who sent them have long since killed them.

Chasing Mice

After a groaning December debate over whether to follow up victory over the Taliban with the destruction of the Iraqi regime, the Bush Administration decided to send American forces to hunt down some anti-American small fry in the boon-docks of the Philippines and Somalia, to leave Saddam Hussein alone, and to continue supporting a Palestinian state. The reasons that U.S. officials give for this are remarkably truthful: Although the vast majority of Americans would welcome a decisive war against Iraq, the administration does not wish to displease those elements of elite opinion who would regard it (correctly) as a departure from the post-World War II habit of not doing away with America's enemies. Moreover, while centrist leaders of Italy, Spain, and Turkey would cheer at the undoing of Saddam Hussein's regime and the end of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, the leftist European leaders so dear to much of U.S. elite opinion would be displeased, and the Saudi royal family would be frightened.

The administration did not try to make a case that chasing mice in the Philippines and Somalia would make America safer than operations against Iraq or the Palestine Authority — just that more people in Washington would be comfortable doing one thing rather than the other. The administration did not try to make a case

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REVIEWS & ESSAYS

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

THE HISTORIAN THUCYDIDES BELIEVED that democracies were the most adept governments at war making. He believed that Classical Athens had not been defeated by Sparta, but lost its war only to the combined efforts of more or less the entire civilized world of the Eastern Mediterranean in concert — Sparta, democratic Sicily, and at times imperial Persia. If we can expand the classical definition of democracy to include consensual governments and parliamentary republics of landowning citizens, then Thucydides seems to be correct — Republican Rome, Swiss cantons, the Renaissance Italian city-states, Victorian England, and democratic America projected military power far beyond what their rather limited territories and populations might otherwise suggest.

And even when Western governments at times were not entirely consensual, classical egalitarianism and distrust of totalitarianism were never really forgotten. The Holy Roman Empire, the Spain of Philip II, and 18th-century European monarchies, while not models of enlightened constitutions, never reached the degree of authoritarianism found among the Aztecs, Ottomans, or Chinese dynasties. Dark-Age notions of personal freedom and patronage, the *Magna Charta*, and Spanish legal codes were reflections of a tradition not comparable to that found in non-Western regimes of the age.

Western military prowess therefore is reflective either of constitutional government or of a tradition of individuality and egalitarianism that survived even within the more narrow confines of monarchy and aristocracy. No historian claims that there is a 2,500-year heritage of uninterrupted democracy or that the West shared unquestioned military superiority during every decade from Pericles's rule to the present age. But the evidence of reappearing prowess at arms is suggestive. Classical Greeks repelled invasions from the much larger empire of Persia, well before Alexander the Great destroyed it. The Mediterranean was for half-a-millennium a Roman lake. And even when Africa and Asia returned to eastern rule under Islam during the supposed nadir of the West, Europe itself remained secure from most attack. The Crusades were a logistical and operational miracle — it was inconceivable that Saladin could have piloted a similarly sized armada into the Atlantic to wage jihad in Paris or London. For a few weeks in Austria the Ottomans threatened Europe — but only due to the internecine squabbling of Protestantism, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism, not to mention the invaders' parasitic borrowing of Western munitions, sea craft, and military organization. By the 16th century, the die was cast. The continual improvement of military technology and exploration and colonization of the Americas and Orient ensured the Western hegemony that continues to the pre-



Ferocious Warmakers: How Democracies Win Wars

sent day, characterized by the preeminence of Europe and America, joined in the last few decades by Japan, Russia, and India, which have sought to westernize their militaries in varying degrees.

Many factors explain the military dynamism of the West, but the fountainhead of its success is the propensity for European states and their descendants to embrace personal freedom and some degree of consensual government. When societies are free, then citizens fight as soldiers with a clear sense of rights and responsibilities. So at Salamis, Athenian sailors rowed to the chants of "Freedom," later gave their individual *triremes* names like "Free Speech," "Freedom," "Right," "Democracy," "Law and Order," and voted for their generals; similar expressions of egalitarianism reappeared among Roman yeomen in the dark days of Hannibal's invasion, and G.I.s at the Battle of the Bulge. Because such fighters believe that they have had a say in the conditions of their own service, and that their officers are agents of their own elected representatives, they fight with the assurance that no one has shanghaied or coerced them into service in battles for the profit and pleasure of a small elite. Cortés is often dubbed an autocrat and worse; in fact, in comparison to Montezuma, he was a leader among equals, as the conquistadors bickered among one other, were subject to suits and writs, and in council hectored and advised their caudillo about the proper strategy of storming Tenochtitlán. Spaniards, not Aztecs, proved themselves to be the more flexible,

spirited, and innovative soldiers in the vicious fighting for Mexico City.

By the same token, consensual governments ensure a standard set of military laws and regulations that soldiers can trust to be uniform and applicable to all — whether they are statutes that regulated service in the legions or the contracts that bound 17th-century European soldiers. Such confidence is not merely an abstract assurance, but reminds fighters in the heat of battle that every man in the phalanx, legion, square, and bombing squadron is subject to more or less the same treatment, therefore creating armies that either stand or fall together.

IN THAT REGARD, FREE SOCIETIES HAVE developed a markedly different idea of military discipline than their adversaries in Asia, Africa, and the pre-Columbian Americas. Obedience is more likely to be defined by staying in rank, keeping in time, advancing and retreating on orders, spearing or shooting in unison, and maintaining cohesion and order along a line. What is behind this propensity for group order? Again, once fairness and freedom are assured, then soldiers are more likely to define their own bravery and duty by the success of their company, not of themselves. From the Greeks onward, it was always more likely for a Westerner to be commended for his efforts at keeping a shield chest high, saving a comrade in arms, or plugging gaps in the line than for collecting captives or amassing kills. Aristotle remarked how different were warriors outside of the classical Greek city-state who kept tabs on

the numbers of their slain victims.

In contrast, at the battle of Plataea (470 B.C.), Herodotus relates that rewards for bravery went to hoplites who stayed in rank, not to those who rushed out to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat ahead of the phalanx. Such allegiance is freely incurred, not coerced — as was the case with Xerxes at Thermopylae, who whipped his soldiers on against the Greeks. In this regard, it is no accident that rarely do suicide-soldiers play a large role in the Western tradition, inasmuch as men have confidence in their own abilities, craft strategies for their survival, and believe that their souls belong to themselves — not to the emperor or distant grandee watching from afar on a peacock throne.

Yet consensual government results in more than just disciplined and like-minded soldiers. The culture of freedom also creates a different type of freethinking individual, one who looks to himself and his immediate group of comrades for solutions rather than the rigid orders of distant priests, strongmen, or divinely-appointed kings. At Midway, eccentric cryptographers cracked the Japanese naval codes before the battle even had begun; it is impossible to imagine that such brilliant misfits would ever have been given similar latitude and independence in the Japanese navy. Once the crippled Yorktown arrived at Pearl Harbor, a horde of pipe fitters, electricians, and carpenters swarmed over her in dry-dock to make ad hoc repairs as each team saw fit. She steamed out to Midway 70 hours later — and was instrumental in the American victory at the carrier battle a few hours afterward. Such miraculous repairs were far different from the Japanese reaction to their own damaged Shokaku and Zuikaku, which, with far less impairment, emerged from the same battle of Coral Sea — only to sit at the Kure naval base for three months awaiting repairs. The strategic result? American individualism and a deeply engrained trust in private initiative ensured that there would be three, not two carriers, at Midway, while Japanese rigidity and hierarchy meant that four, not six, Japanese flattops would face the Americans.

Of course, much is made of the superiority of Western military technology — as if such deadly weapons exist in a vacuum and are not themselves reflective of larger social and cultural attitudes toward secularism, free and unbridled speech, and the unrestricted flow of information. In truth, from the Greeks to the present, open societies usually have fielded armies whose weaponry was on par with, or more usually far superior to, the equipment of their enemies. Greek catapults, Roman siege-engines, Byzantine Greek fire, medieval cross-bows, Renaissance *harquebuses*, and English men-of-war meant that Western forces (well before the Industrial Revolution) could kill great numbers of their enemies while suffering inordinately small casualties themselves. Why

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Terrorism and the Imperial Struggle

BY DAVID TUCKER

IN THE EARLY 15TH CENTURY, EUROPEAN nations began building overseas empires. At its peak, the imperial sway of the European powers was vast. David Abernathy, in *The Dynamics of Global Dominance, European Overseas Empires, 1415–1980*, estimates that “three-fifths of the world’s population live in countries whose entire territory has at one time been claimed by a European state.” In 1913, the homelands of the European imperial powers took up about 1.6 percent of the earth’s surface. They controlled another 41.3 percent overseas. Europeans once controlled the territory of two out of every three of the current members of the United Nations. In about a third of these cases, European rule lasted 250 years; in another half, it lasted a century or so. Only a handful of places — e.g., Japan, Thailand, Afghanistan, and what is now Ethiopia — did not have at least part of their territory controlled by Europeans.

Abernathy argues that the nations of Europe brought to bear on the world three sources of power: their public institutions (government and military); their private business establishments; and their religious organizations. Correspondingly, in the places that fell under their power, they altered political, economic, and spiritual life. Exerting this power did not produce versions of Europe overseas, except usually in superficial ways. It did, however, change fundamentally what had existed before. European power was able to establish and maintain itself and produce such powerful effects because it consisted of these three separate sources that combined with and supported one another in various ways.

Before launching on the imperial enterprise, these sources of power had been increased and tested in the process of competitive nation building that gave rise to a set of European nation-states. This process continued throughout the life of imperialism, motivating and strengthening it. Behind all these developments and driving them forward was a revolution in man’s relation to nature, the appearance in Europe of modern science.

In the decades following World War II, formal European political control over imperial territories came to an end. Yet economic power remained, as did spiritual and political influence. The attacks of September 11 targeted symbols of two of the three sources of power that constituted Western imperialism: the economic and



the political. (Interestingly, the religiously inspired attackers did not attack a symbol of European religion.) Because the recent attacks target not merely Western power but also the principles out of which it grew, as well as the civilian populations of the former imperial powers, the assaults mark a new stage in what might be called the imperial struggle.

The preceding stage, the European withdrawal from empire, did not occur because of a military challenge by indigenous peoples. Excluded from political institutions, they could not easily organize military forces; and even if they could, the disparities in power had become too great. The battle for independence, therefore, had to be political. The contradiction between respect for European principles (for example, majority rule) in Europe and the attenuation of these principles in the overseas empires afforded a fertile source of complaint. The inhabitants of British North America in the 18th century were the first to use this tactic with their rallying cry of “no taxation without representation.” As this example indicates, the decisive struggle was fought among the indigenous people themselves. To quote John Adams, the American Revolution “was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people.” The struggle for hearts and minds — this “people’s war,” as it came to be called in the 20th century — sought to negate European power, especially military power, not by confronting it directly but by making it irrelevant. The Europeans could win every battle but still lose the war because military victory could not lead to effective political control.

Violence had a place in the anti-colonial struggle. Those opposed to European control used violence, i.e. terrorism, to display their power, thus attracting the

undecided to their cause, and intimidating both the locals who did not support independence and the Europeans who lived in their midst. Once intimidated and organized, the indigenous people became the basis of larger and more organized uses of force, what came to be called guerrilla warfare. In a few instances (e.g., the North American colonies against Britain, North Vietnam against the French) indigenous forces attained a proficiency that approached what the imperial power could deploy. Generally, however, the anti-colonial forces were not capable of engaging European forces directly. Moreover, they were rarely and only in special circumstances (Irish violence in Great Britain; Algerian violence in France) capable of projecting violence into the imperial homeland, and even then took this step only when opposition to independence was unusually strong.

Western imperialism and the forces that made it possible transformed the world. In fact, they made it possible to speak truly of world politics and a worldwide economic system. But those forces are now beyond the power of the West to control. We often hear about “blowback,” the unfortunate consequences of our support for the guerrilla fighters who resisted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Callous as it may sound, if the September 11 attacks were part of the price that had to be paid for putting an end to the Soviet Union, it was still a bargain. But this price may pale in comparison to the potential “blowback” from European imperialism and the spirit that animated it. Western economic and scientific ideas and practices, so essential to globalization, have placed enormous power — financial, microbial, chemical and nuclear — within the grasp of some and the reach of others who do not share, indeed who hate, the Western spirit.

The attacks on September 11 are the

clearest indication yet that we are engaged in the next stage of the imperial struggle. Unlike the previous stage, the anti-colonial struggle, our enemies do not use our principles to undermine our confidence. They do not tell us that they seek to establish, even superficially, Western regimes, whether socialist or liberal-democratic. Instead, they seek to return to a pre-modern, non-Western, largely imagined world of Islamic purity.

To make room for this way of life and to preserve it, so they believe, they must fundamentally alter the balance of power in the world. Since their goal is so uncongenial to us, persuading us to support them will be harder, perhaps impossible. Thus intimidation with violence will be more important in this stage of the imperial struggle than in the previous stage. But as in the previous stage, our enemies will avoid direct military confrontation with us. They are yet incapable of that.

Instead, they pursue a strategy of people’s war. Like their predecessors, they use violence against the West to display their power and recruit supporters. If our enemies gain more adherents and intimidate the governments of more Muslim countries, their power will grow. Perhaps some day they may be able to confront our military forces directly, should it come to that. Until then, they pursue people’s war with a new twist — not only a political war for the support of indigenous peoples but a war waged directly against the imperial power’s home population.

The strategy of direct attack on a civilian population is not unprecedented, of course, even within the West. It was a feature of European wars in both the 17th and 20th centuries, for example. As these cases suggest, such attacks perhaps should be expected in wars fought for principle, whether religious or political. But the European or Western liberalism that spread around the world did tend gradually to distinguish between civilians and professional soldiers, and afford the former a degree of protection from the terrors of war. In the United States, this liberal view contrasted with an older republican view that, to be fully a citizen, a man should be willing to bear arms and die defending his country. In a sense, the next stage of the imperial struggle has returned us, involuntarily, to this older understanding, though without its provisional protections for women and children.

As President Bush acknowledged, more American civilians than professional soldiers are likely to die in the War on Terrorism. Without fully realizing it, perhaps, every American has been given by our enemies the awful privilege of facing death for his country’s sake.

David Tucker is an associate professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

A Premature Post-Mortem for Liberalism

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

The Strange Death of American Liberalism, by H.W. Brands. Yale University Press, 200 pages, \$22.50

THE STRANGE DEATH OF AMERICAN Liberalism is probably meant to recall George Dangerfield's 1935 classic, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, which described the beginning of the slow-motion downfall of England's Liberal Party in the years immediately preceding World War I. Like the Democratic Party here in the 1960s and 1970s, the British Liberal Party buckled under the pressures from that generation's version of radical "new politics." As Dangerfield explained in his colorful prose, "the burden of Liberalism grew more and more irksome; it began to give out a dismal, rattling sound; it was just as if some unfortunate miracle had been performed upon its contents, turning them into nothing more than bits of old iron, fragments of intimate crockery, and other relics of a domestic past. . . [The Liberal Party] died from poison administered by its Conservative foes, and from disillusion over the inefficacy of the word 'Reform.'"

Dangerfield's description parallels the conservative view of the trials of liberalism in the U.S. since the 1960s, and at first glance it appears Brands is going to follow suit and offer a ratification of conservative triumphalism. "Liberals lost," Brands says on the book's fourth page, "not because they were wrong about American society, but because they were wrong about the world." Conservatives recognize that theirs is only a partial victory; for all the bruises and defeats liberalism has experienced over the past generation, liberalism remains entrenched in the media, higher education, and especially in bureaucratic government. Thus liberalism is still setting the political and cultural agenda of the country. Brands's real thesis, therefore, comes as a shock: American political culture is essentially conservative (or at least anti-government), and liberalism is an anomaly. The Cold War made liberalism dominant in the post-war decades; the passing of the Cold War, and liberalism's gradual embarrassment over the Cold War, led to the downfall of liberalism over the last generation.

Much of Brands's account is plainly right, and his book is filled with many shrewd observations and perceptions. (Nixon, he correctly notes, "was as much a liberal as John Kennedy or Lyndon Johnson.") But on close inspection there is mischief at work. The tacit premise of Brands's analysis is that the "national security state" necessary to prosecute the Cold War was the bulwark of big government in the post-war decades. Now, the nefarious "national-security state" was a

key theme of New Left revisionism in the 1960s and '70s that sought to blame the Cold War on the United States, or at any rate to diminish the Cold War's seriousness. The benign end of the Cold War has given this argument a new lease on life — especially among the libertarian Right, which has converged with the isolationist rump of the Old Right (think Pat Buchanan) and the New Left on this point.

It is difficult to tell whether Brands sympathizes with one of these camps, or whether he is simply taunting liberals by ascribing their fleeting glory to the part of their legacy of which they grew to be most ashamed. The point of both Left and Right revisionism is that the Cold War was unnecessary, and Brands seems to share this point of view, though he does not say so explicitly. Here and there the reader will detect in Brands's prose the rhetorical tones of New Left revisionism, but New Left scholars such as Gabriel Kolko are missing from his bibliography; the figure Brands lauds most highly as a critic of the national security state is the original "Mr. Conservative," Senator Robert Taft.

The plot thickens when Brands introduces his back-story, a synoptic account of American political life since the Founding that emphasizes public distrust of centralized government. Brands has to perform some fancy footwork to lend verisimilitude to this argument. He portrays Woodrow Wilson's presidential victory as an expression of public preference for smaller government, and notes that in 1932 Franklin Roosevelt ran against deficit spending and centralized government. The New Deal was comparatively restrained in its reach, Brands argues. In all previous wars going back to the Revolution, government shrank in the aftermath. It wasn't until after World War II, he claims, that government remained large and growing, and this only because of the Cold War. "[I]t wasn't an accident that the high tide of liberalism coincided with the high tide of America's participation in the Cold War."

Ronald Reagan appears in Brands's account as a highly ironic figure. Reagan tried to revive 1950s-style fervor for the Cold War in the 1980s, which, it is implied, would have revived liberalism — Reagan's sworn enemy. Brands thinks Reagan failed to rally the public to his anti-communist banner, leading him to engage Gorbachev in his second term and bring the Cold War to its close. Clinton and Gore, Brands says, both kept a studied distance from old-fashioned liberalism — remember, "the era of big government is over."

Brands is persuasive on many particulars — Americans' skepticism about centralized government is a legacy of the Revolution and Founding Era — but he elides the essential changes to our constitutional order that Progressivism wrought, changes that were instrumental in creating the administrative state that is the engine of perpetual liberalism today. Though Clinton and Gore paid lip service to the idea of small government, they pressed for every new government program they could. This appetite, like many others in the Clinton Administration, remained

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THE REVIEW OF POLITICS

CITED AND READ THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR THREE GENERATIONS

CITED AND READ THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR THREE GENERATIONS FROM ITS INITIAL DIRECTION BY FOUNDING EDITOR WALDEMAR GURIAN THE REVIEW HAS CONTINUED TO EMPHASIZE THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL APPROACH TO POLITICS. AMONG THOSE WHOM IT PUBLISHED AND ENCOURAGED ARE HANNAH ARENDT, JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH, JACQUES MARITAIN, TALCOTT PARSONS, CLINTON ROSSITER, EDWARD SHILS, LEO STRAUSS AND ERIC VOEGELIN.

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COVER STORY

THE ADAMS FAMILY

The Genteel Decline of America's First Dynasty

BY CHARLES R. KESLER

America's First Dynasty: The Adamses, 1735-1918, by Richard Brookhiser. Free Press, 256 pages, \$25

A MAN OF LETTERS IS USUALLY SOMEONE who writes very well about a subject he does not quite understand. Richard Brookhiser is the exception, a beautiful stylist who has gradually established himself as one of the best political biographers in the land.

A senior editor of *National Review* and columnist for the *New York Observer*, Brookhiser earns his living as a conservative political journalist and commentator on the New York scene. Both have prepared him for the remarkable series of books he has written over the past two decades. *The Outside Story* illuminated the 1984 presidential election by insisting that the heart of the story was the candidates' words and deeds, i.e., the contest as citizens saw it, not the Teddy White-style inside dope from behind the scenes. In *The Way of the WASP* (1991), Brookhiser (who is one) defended the contribution that White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture (really, character) had made to American life, including its ability to attract non-WASP immigrants who practically adopted it as their own.

Brookhiser's masterpiece is *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington* (1996), a bold work of moral portraiture that exhibited to a new generation of readers why Washington was a great man. Telling the outside story of this dignified WASP who became the quintessential American, Brookhiser displayed his own ability to revitalize political biography, a genre that sold well but had become bloated, boring, and blind to the protean challenges and hard-fought virtues of the politician's life. Rather than bury his subject in a mountain of trivia, Brookhiser adapted from Plutarch the idea of a brief biography centered on Washington's character and devoted to measuring him by the standards of statesmanship.

With *Founding Father*, Brookhiser became the anti-Gore Vidal, rejecting Vidal's self-serving cynicism in favor of a sympathetic, though not uncritical, understanding of the demands of public life on public men. The same sensibility animated Brookhiser's next volume, *Alexander Hamilton: American* (1999), which showed Hamilton, brash, talented, ambitious, as the New Yorker he was, with plenty of ambition for his country, too.

America's First Dynasty is the latest in Brookhiser's series of brief moral biographies, this time of a great American political family ("dynasty" is rather a stretch) instead of a single statesman. The book has two stories to tell about the Adamses. The first is the story of what it was like to be an Adams, constantly trying to meet the family's expectations of greatness on the stage of national politics. The second is the account of how the country changed around them, and of the Adamses' growing alienation from the America they sought to serve.

Brookhiser is better on the first than the second theme. From the evidence he presents, it was much harder to be an Adams than, say, a Roosevelt, Kennedy, or Bush. There was a similarly intense pressure to rise in politics and the same generational jostling, of course; but the Adamses set the intellectual bar for themselves much higher, and disdained political parties.

John Adams was a hard act to follow. He told his son, John Quincy: "You come into life with advantages which will disgrace you if your success is mediocre. And if you do not rise to the head not only of your profession, but of your country, it will be owing to your own laziness, slovenliness, and obstinacy." In other words, if John Quincy did not become president, his life would be a failure. Thanks, Dad.

John Quincy repaid the favor by advising his son Charles Francis, who anted to drop out of Harvard, the family college, that if he could not attend classes he should at least attend church. "Let your scholarship as it pleases heaven. If I must give up all expectation of success or distinction for

you in this life," at least "preserve me from the harrowing thought of your perdition in the next." Charles Francis did not drop out.

Little wonder, reports Brookhiser, that "alcohol laid waste two-thirds of the second and third generations" of the family, and that one of the drunkard sons committed suicide. Brookhiser concentrates, however, on the four family members, one from each generation, who achieved greatness or at least came close: the two U.S. presidents, John and John Quincy; the accomplished diplomat and congressman turned family historian, Charles Francis; and the historian and artist, Henry, who was Charles Francis's third son. Other Adamses merit passing mention.

America's First Dynasty brings Brookhiser's marvelous eye for detail and anecdote to bear on this unhappy but high-minded family. The book glows with its author's style, an elegant, updated classicism. Yet the work doesn't quite do justice to the Adamses' thought, nor to the changing intellectual world in which Charles Francis and, particularly, Henry found themselves.

For example, Brookhiser writes repeatedly that John Adams "disagreed" or "quarreled" with the Declaration of Independence. This is misleading. He dissented from the egalitarian misinterpretation of it, that equal natural rights should produce a society of perfectly equal human beings. Adams believed that an aristocracy would assert itself in every society, America included. But Brookhiser doesn't note Adams's eccentric definition of an aristocrat — anyone who could command or influence more than one vote. Adams feared the political effects of aristocracy in a republic, though he thought these could be controlled by creating a second branch of the legislature just for the few. This is the theme of his three-volume *Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*, one of the strangest and most tedious works of political theory ever written.

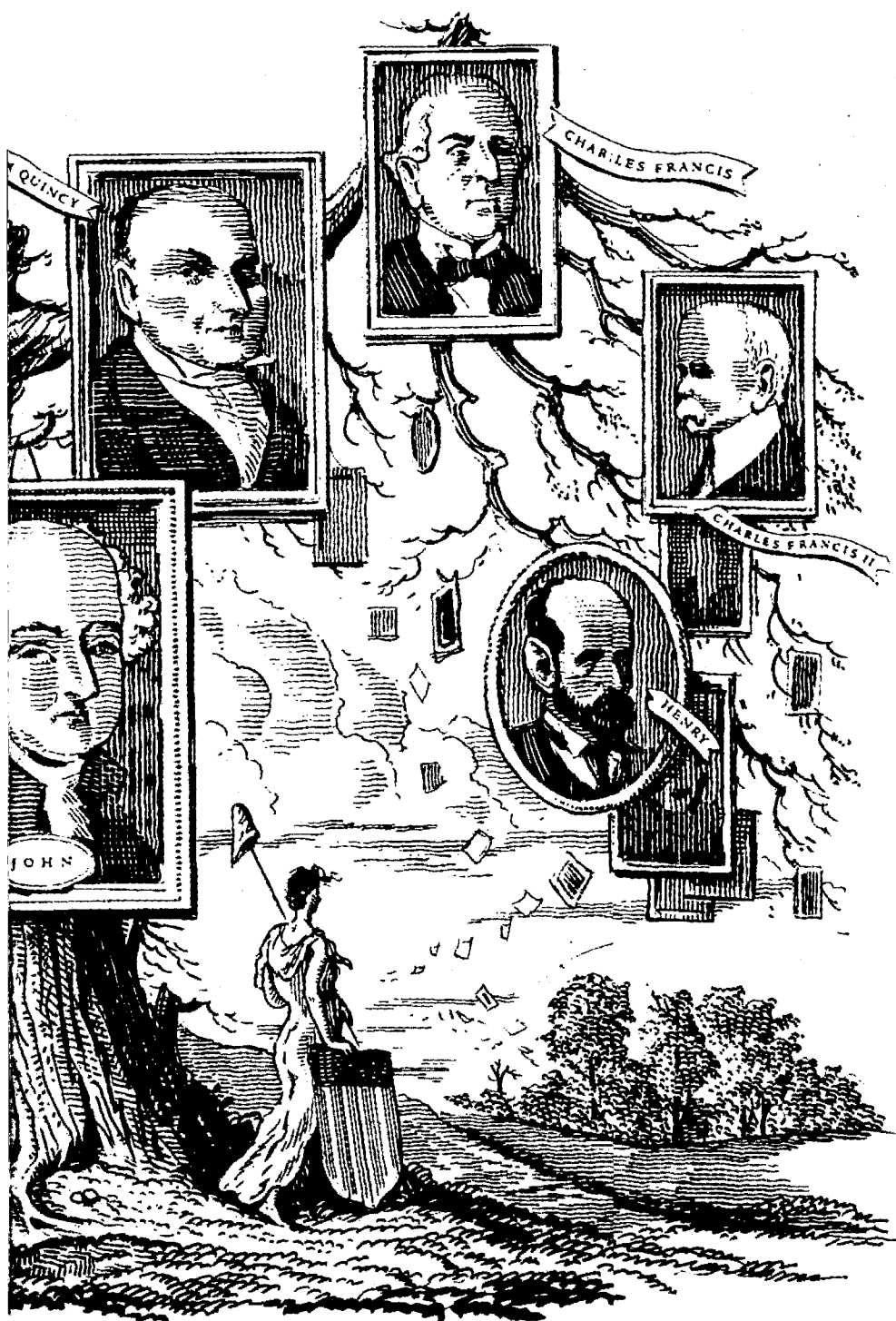
Brookhiser regrets "the arsenic whiff of unrelieved irony" in Henry Adams's histo-

ries, but praises *Mont St. Michel and Chartres*, especially his account of the medieval love of the Virgin Mary. Strangely, though, "the Dynamo," modern science, Darwinism, and Progressivism, which came to dominate many aspects of American thought after the Civil War, receive little sustained attention in *America's First Dynasty*. These ideas haunted the later Adamses, particularly Henry, who largely as a result found it impossible to believe anymore in the ideas of his forbears.

Brookhiser knows this, but he prefers to keep the story all in the family. The age's general challenge to American ideals becomes a more genteel story of the accumulating burden of the past within the family Adams. It wasn't all the Adamses' fault, though they might like to think so.

Charles R. Kesler is editor of the Claremont Review of Books.





John Adams

BY C. BRADLEY THOMPSON

John Adams, by David McCullough.
Simon & Schuster, 736 pages, \$35

ON JULY 4TH, 1826, 50 YEARS TO THE day after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson died. From his deathbed, Adams whispered those famous last words: "Thomas Jefferson survives."

Literally speaking, he was mistaken. Jefferson had expired some hours before. In another sense, though, he was right: the Jefferson legacy continued to live and prosper, while Adams's reputation, figuratively speaking, died an ignominious death.

Unlike Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Jefferson, John Adams never had what he called "puffers," or what

we today call PR men. During his lifetime, he had no James Carville to defend him from partisan political opponents, and after he was gone he had no Arthur Schlesinger to mythologize his life and character for posterity.

Until now. With the publication of David McCullough's wonderfully engaging *John Adams*, "Yankee John" has finally found the "puffer" that he has so long deserved. Zooming to the top of the best-seller list, McCullough has done for Adams what Adams was never able to do for himself — make him popular!

McCullough's thesis is as simple as it now seems undeniable: No one, not even George Washington, did so much for the cause of American independence as John Adams. To argue that Adams was America's greatest founding statesman, the true "Atlas of American Independence," is a bold claim. McCullough's brief for Adams's greatness is persuasive.

Adams was at center stage in the American Revolution from beginning to end. He was a leading voice in Boston radical politics during the early years of the Imperial Crisis, and with his election to the first Continental Congress in 1774, Adams emerged as one of America's leading patriots. Over the course of the next two years, no man worked as hard or played as important a role in the movement for independence. Adams chaired the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence; he founded the American Navy; he drafted America's first Model Treaty; and, working 18-hour days, he served as a one-man Department of War and Ordnance.

Shortly after the battles at Lexington and Concord, Adams began to argue that it was time for the colonies to declare independence and to constitutionalize the powers, rights, and responsibilities of self-government. In May 1776, following Adams's leadership, Congress advised the various colonial assemblies to draft constitutions and construct new governments. At the request of several colleagues, he wrote his own constitutional blueprint, *Thoughts on Government*, which was used as a working model by constitution-makers in several states. Later, in 1779, Adams drafted the Massachusetts Constitution, which was the most sophisticated constitution produced during the Revolutionary era, and, as McCullough reminds us, is the "oldest functioning written constitution in the world."

Adams's greatest moment in Congress came in the summer of 1776. On July 1, Congress considered final arguments on the question of independence. John Dickinson argued forcefully against independence. When no one responded to Dickinson, Adams rose and delivered a rhetorical tour de force that moved the assembly to vote in favor of independence. It was, arguably, the most important speech in American history. Years later, Thomas Jefferson recalled that so powerful in "thought & expression" was Adams, that he "moved us from our seats." He was, Jefferson said, "our Colossus on the floor."

Adams spent much of the 1780s in Europe as a diplomat and propagandist for the American Revolution. Shunned by aristocratic old-world diplomats, Adams worked tirelessly, employing what he called "militia diplomacy"; he raced back and forth between Paris and the Hague, breaking all the rules of diplomatic etiquette, and pounding on doors until he was listened to. Eventually, he succeeded in convincing the Dutch Republic to recognize American independence in 1782, and he negotiated critical loans with Amsterdam bankers.

After twice serving as vice-president under George Washington, the American people elevated Adams to the presidency in 1796. His greatest accomplishment as president was to navigate the nation through the political storm known as the "Quasi-War."

In what McCullough calls the "bravest" act of his political career, Adams (consulting no one) incurred the wrath of Republicans and his own Federalist party by sending a peace mission to France. The resulting Treaty of Morefontaine secured American neutrality and commercial freedom at the critical moment of its birth as a nation.

McCULLOUGH HAS WRITTEN AN utterly compelling, even beautiful, account of Adams's life and character. The book is not without its faults, however. Despite his extraordinary accomplishments as a statesman, John Adams was first and foremost a thinking revolutionary. Oddly, McCullough has almost nothing to say about Adams's political thought.

The contours of Adams's thought are best seen through a distinction that Adams himself made between the "principles of liberty" and the "principles of government." The first are concerned with the nature of justice and political right, and the second with constitutional design and construction.

Adams most clearly enunciated what he meant by the "principles of liberty" in his 1765 essay, "A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law." The "Dissertation" is an essay in moral education; its purpose was to define and rekindle the American "spirit of liberty" in the shadow of the Stamp Act. But what did he mean by a "spirit of liberty"? Spiritedness for Adams united in body and soul certain "sensations of freedom" and certain "ideas of right." Adams sought to inspire the colonists' "sensations of freedom" by imploring all patriots to recall the hardships endured by the first settlers in order to guarantee present freedoms. On a deeper level, however, the revolution for Adams was about certain "ideas of right," and so he appealed to the colonists' reason, imploring them to study the philosophical foundations of their rights and liberties in the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Locke.

Liberty, for Adams, meant freedom from foreign domination, freedom from unjust government coercion, freedom from other individuals, and freedom from the tyranny of oneself. A free people ought to be jealous of their rights and liberties, and they must always stand on guard to protect them. Adams knew that genuine freedom is fragile, fleeting, and rare; few people have it and those that do must fight to keep it.

Adams's theory of political architecture is presented in his *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (1787-88). At the core of Adams's theory were three basic but essential principles of government: first, representation instead of direct democracy; second, a separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers; and third, a mixture and balance in the legislature between the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic social elements that Adams thought natural to all societies.

These three principles were the foun-

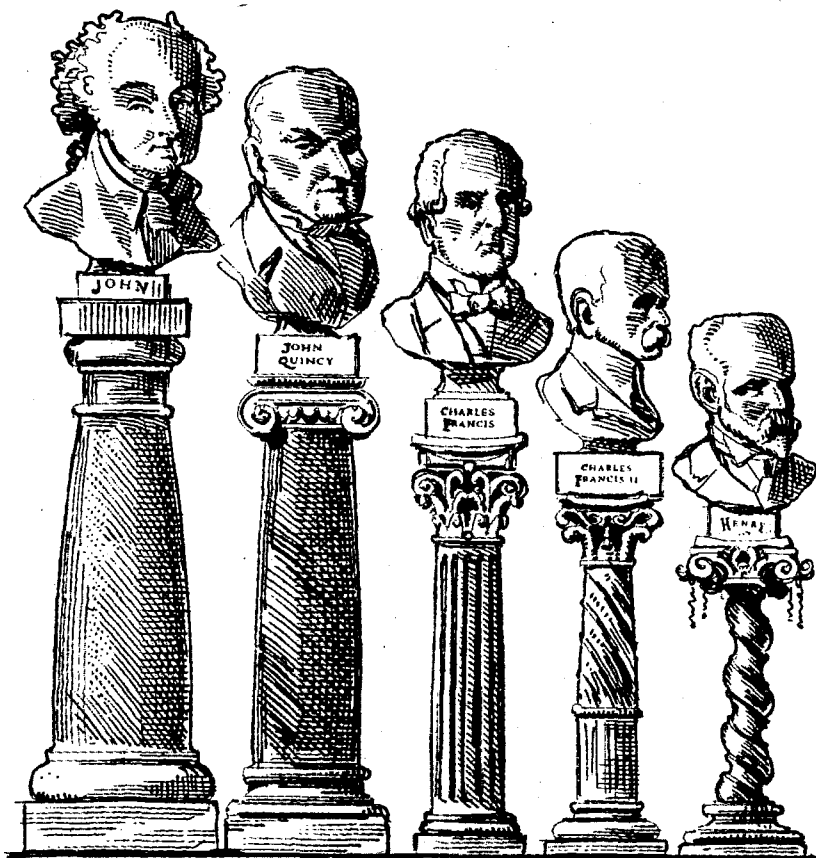
dation and framework on which he thought all constitutions must be constructed. The first two, representation and separation of powers, were distinctly modern inventions: both were logically derived from Lockean natural-rights theory and its corollary theory of consent. The last principle, however, what Adams called the "triple equipoise," was hardly a modern invention. With its roots in the theory and practice of classical antiquity, the so-called mixed regime rested on an entirely different theoretical foundation. Adams's great theoretical achievement was to reconcile these hitherto discordant doctrines.

From Adams's perspective there were two main problems that must be addressed by all republican constitution-makers. The first was to find some kind of constitutional device by which to neutralize the vices, but also to draw out and up the talents of the exceptional few. The second and related task was to constitutionalize the naturally occurring conflict between the wealthy few and the poor many. In other words, the great problem of constitutional construction was in reconciling aristocratic ambition with democratic envy.

Adams's solution to this intractable problem was to incorporate what he called the "triple equipoise" — i.e., a mixing and balancing of the one (a president with a legislative veto), the few (a senate) and the many (a house of representatives) — into the legislative branch. Adams's tricameral legislature would harness, channel and balance the naturally occurring conflict between the few and the many in politically useful ways. The legislative triple equipoise would force these competing social orders to moderate their passions, to look beyond their immediate self-interest, and to compromise with competing interests. In other words, each order with its incomplete view of justice would be forced to moderate and elevate its partial claims. Adams's theory of government is a true innovation in the history and practice of western constitutionalism.

AND WHAT OF ADAMS'S RELEVANCE for today? It is probably true that there is not much in Adams's thought that can be appropriated for present use. Unlike Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, Adams did not leave behind a useable theory of political economy. In a deeper sense, however, Adams's contribution to the American experiment in self-government was more important. Adams is the man most responsible for the development in America of the idea of a written constitution as fundamental law.

We tend to forget that the American political tradition has never derailed from its original trajectory precisely because it runs on a constitutional track first laid by Adams. The constitutionalism that



Adams placed at the heart of American civic life established a barrier to the neo-feudal aspirations of John C. Calhoun and to the socialist dreams of Eugene V. Debs. Adams's parchment barriers have proved to be an iron cage for non-liberal traditions.

We can also still profit from Adams's prescient analysis of the ways in which democracies democratize. He knew that unchecked democratization would eventually liberate the most wicked democratic passions. Genuine democratic equality for Adams meant constitutionalizing rights — rights held in common by all people. But equality before the law must also recognize the natural differences between human beings — i.e., inequalities of wisdom, virtue, merit, beauty, and wealth. Adams reminds us that democratic greatness must be able to recognize and appreciate the truly great.

Adams was not a pragmatist; he could not abide those who love the thrill of politics and the art of the deal more than principled thought and action. Adams held to that old-fashioned belief that men ought to "avow their opinions and defend them with boldness." He thought prudence rightly understood to be a commanding and not a retreating virtue. Prudence and rhetoric, he thought, must be connected to, and dependent upon, a higher ethical end, otherwise they collapse into a hollow cleverness.

"Mausoleums, statues, monuments will never be erected to me," Adams once lamented. Thanks to David McCullough, we can now begin to build our monuments of thanks.

C. Bradley Thompson, associate professor of history and political science at Ashland University in Ohio, is author of John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty (University Press of Kansas, 1998).

John Quincy Adams

BY RICHARD SAMUELSON

John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, a Private Life, by Paul C. Nagel. Harvard University Press, 448 pages, \$17.95 (paper)

John Quincy Adams: Policymaker for the Union, by James E. Lewis. Scholarly Resources, 192 pages, \$19.95

John Quincy Adams, by Lynn H. Parsons. Madison House, 272 pages, \$19.95

Arguing About Slavery, by William Lee Miller. Vintage Books, 592 pages, \$17 (paper)

MOST STUDENTS OF AMERICAN POLITICS agree that John Quincy Adams was a great American, yet, besides the chapter on Adams in Ted Sorenson's *Profiles in Courage*, he is seldom given a place in America's pantheon. That may be changing. Many Americans saw Anthony Hopkins's portrayal of Adams in Steven Spielberg's 1997 film "Amistad." David McCullough, author of the best-selling biography of John Adams, is lobbying for an Adams family monument in Washington. These developments are welcome, for America could learn from John Quincy Adams's story.

In the last few years, several scholars have tried to rise to the challenge. Unfortunately, none of their books is quite up to the subject. Paul C. Nagel, an expert on the Adams family, tries to capture the "inner" Adams by writing a heavily psychological study. James E. Lewis, a diplomatic historian, highlights the concern for the fate of the Union that drove much of Adams's

career. But his book is interesting more for its discussion about the politics of the Union than for its treatment of Adams. Lynn H. Parsons, who has been working on Adams for many years, provides a very readable general biography. In addition, William Lee Miller chronicles Adams's heroic fight against the Congressional "gag" rule against anti-slavery petitions. All of these books are serviceable, but none of them does justice to the subject.

According to the traditional account, Adams had two careers. The first was an eminently successful career as a diplomat. With the exception of his five years in the Senate from 1803 to 1808, Adams worked in the Union's diplomatic corps from 1794 to 1825, culminating with his tenure as Secretary of State under President Monroe, 1817-1825. After a single, miserable term as President, 1825-1829, Adams returned to Washington to begin what scholars call his second career, as a representative from his home district in Quincy, Massachusetts. There he played out his life sparring with the "slave power." Throughout both careers, Adams remained active in science and letters.

Given the scope of Adams's life and works — poet, polemicist, historian, diarist, scientist, Harvard professor, diplomat, and politician — it is no surprise that he presents scholars with a challenge. Perhaps Adams's biographer ought to make a virtue of necessity. Rather than trying to give due attention to each of Adams's interests or arbitrarily triaging Adams's life, a scholar would be wise to consider what drove a man to lead such a life. Perhaps we can bring coherence to Adams's seemingly chaotic and eclectic life if we focus on his profound ambition.

When we take seriously Adams's yearning for greatness, his diverse activities come together into a grand pattern. Adams set out not simply to continue the work that his father had begun, but also to build upon and transform it. In 1841 Adams published "The Wants of Man," in which he wrote,

I want the genius to conceive, the talents to unfold
Designs, the vicious to retrieve, the virtuous to uphold.
Inventive power, combining skill; a persevering soul,
Of human hearts to mold the will, and reach from Pole to Pole.

Five years later, looking over the diary which he had kept almost his entire adult life, Adams lamented, "If my intellectual powers had been such as have been sometimes committed by the Creator of man to single individuals of the species, my diary would have been, next to the Holy Scriptures, the most precious and valuable book ever written by human hands, and I should have been one of the greatest benefactors of my country and of mankind. . . [and] have banished war and slavery from the face of the earth forever." Adams wished to stamp his benevolent imprint on the soul of man.

Where did that kind of ambition come from? In part, Adams got it from his parents.

While he was busy leading the drive for independence in the spring of 1776, John wrote Abigail Adams to look after the children. "Take Care that they don't go astray. Cultivate their Minds, inspire their little Hearts, raise their Wishes. Fix their Attention upon great and glorious Objects, root out every little Thing, weed out every Meanness, make them great and manly." Those lessons were not lost on his eldest son. Yet John Quincy's ambition presented him with a problem. Historically, great men had been the founders of nations, but his nation had already been founded. The avenue open to Adams was to build on and consolidate the work of his father's generation, within the new nation and in her relations with the rest of the world. Sensing that the American experiment was fragile, Adams sought to save the republic, earning enduring glory for himself in the process.

In his diplomatic career, as Lewis highlights, Adams sought to solve "the problem of neighborhood." Wars undermined liberty throughout history. Faced with an armed enemy, a nation typically sacrificed domestic liberty for security. The Transcontinental Treaty of 1819, negotiated by Adams, made the neighborhood safe for American democracy. With title to land from Florida to Oregon, the American Union effectively became an island nation. The Monroe Doctrine, the framework of which Adams gave to his Chief Executive, built upon that work by keeping the European powers from re-establishing a strong beach-head in the Americas. Yet Adams worried that securing American dominance in North America would merely be the easy part of a larger project. Upon signing the Transcontinental Treaty, Adams wrote in his diary, "It is the work of an intelligent and all-embracing Cause. May it speed as it has begun! for, without a continuation of the blessings already showered down upon it, all that has been done will be worse than useless, and vain." From that day forward, Adams worried that his plans could backfire. Historically, republics had been small, and, the theory went, could only be small. America's founders had hoped that a federal republic could secure liberty over a large territory, but no one knew how far the federal principle could be taken. In addition, the land was brought into a Union half-slave and half-free, with no guarantee that it would serve the cause of liberty.

From the start Adams intended to use his diplomatic victories to serve the larger causes of liberty and union. Though Adams seemed indifferent during the Missouri Crisis of 1819 and 1820, doing little more than having deep philosophical discussions of the matter with Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, he had long had the two-sided problem of slavery and sectionalism in his sights. He planned to use his presidency to unify the nation, and to propagate republican government across the continent. By selling the lands the nation had acquired between 1803 and 1819 and by erecting a tariff to protect domestic industry, the government

would take in the revenue necessary to build roads and canals, which would integrate the Union politically and commercially; and at the same time, those revenues would pay for improvements in the arts and sciences that would help the nation progress. The program would integrate the Union, rendering the sections so dependent upon each other as to make sectionalism unthinkable. Gradually, it would extinguish slavery by modernizing the Southern economy. Sensing Adams's design, the South fought against Adams's program with all its might, arguing that it was defending American liberty against a tyrannical government. The South won.

At first, failure left Adams thunderstruck, but it ultimately mellowed him and made him wise. After losing the presidency to Andrew Jackson in 1828, Adams found himself reciting the French opera about Richard the Lionhearted which he had heard many years before in Paris. The minstrel sings to imprisoned Richard: "O, Richard! O, mon Roi! L'Univers t'abandonne." For years before his presidency, Adams had regarded himself, like his nation, as a child of destiny, but fate had other plans for him. In 1837, he reflected upon his plight, and his nation's:

The great object of my life therefore as applied to the administration of the Government of the United States has failed — The American Union as a moral person in the family of Nations, is to live from hand to mouth, to cast away, instead of using for the improvement of its own condition . . . to rivet into perpetuity the clanking chain of the slave, and to waste in boundless bribery to the west the invaluable inheritance of the Public Lands.

IF TRENDS CONTINUED, THE AMERICAN CONTINENT would be a giant house of bondage; the bounty Adams secured for the nation in his diplomatic career would indeed be "worse than useless, and vain."

As he contemplated the failure of his program, Adams concluded that he had been outmaneuvered not just politically but also rhetorically. The South defeated Adams in the name of liberty. Clearly that was paradoxical. How could the defenders of slavery speak of rights? As he thought about the problem, Adams grew more and more to agree with his father's opinion that there was a defect in much Enlightened thought. "The philosophical spirit of the last century," Adams wrote, "...under the fair and virtuous vizard of religious toleration, harbored a deadly hatred to Christianity, and a secret devotion to the absurdest of all dogmas, the superstition of atheism." Though the *Philosophes* claimed to support liberty, their philosophy actually undermined it. Though they thought that reason alone upheld the rights of men, in fact, Adams concluded, it was the Christian teaching that all men were made in God's image that did so. Hence John C. Calhoun could speak unblushingly of his rights to liberty and property, even as he defended slavery.

Adams dedicated the rest of his life to

fighting the South's false liberal-republicanism; to promoting instead New England's conceptions of liberty and union. Like most New Englanders, Adams believed that the principles of 1776 were the moral foundation of the American republic and he set out to spread that gospel. In July 4th orations in 1831, 1837, and 1843; in public eulogies of Madison, Monroe, and Lafayette; in a major address on the golden anniversary of the Constitution; and in many other speeches Adams spoke of the link that bound 1787 to 1776, and both to the Biblical tradition, with all the eloquence that the first Boylston Professor of Rhetoric could muster. Grateful admirers throughout the North soon dubbed Adams "old man eloquent," for his work in the service of his country.

Haunted by the sense that his role in expanding the Union had unwittingly served the "sable genius of the South," Adams spent his last years seeking atonement for the unintentional sins of his early career. He fought heroically with Southern defenders of slavery and Northern Union men to put the North on a firm anti-slavery footing. Like Daniel Webster, Adams had once thought that liberty could not endure the loss of union, but he now found that union was an inadequate organizing principle for American politics. It was a mistake to think that the Union would always serve the cause of liberty. Congressman Adams highlighted the threats to liberty within the Union by demonstrating the South's true colors. Employing his caustic personality and whatever issues were at hand, Adams baited hot-headed Southerners to attack him. At one point, Southern congressmen even tried to impeach Adams, only to find themselves painted into a political, procedural, and rhetorical corner. Each sally Adams provoked from them only advanced Northern antipathy to slavery.

Adams died fearing that his rearguard action would fall short. While writing his brief for the *Amistad* case in the Spring of 1841, Adams reflected in his diary:

The world, the flesh, and all the devils in hell are arrayed against any man who now in this North American Union shall dare to join the standard of Almighty God to put down the African slave-trade; and what can I, upon the verge of my seventy-fourth birthday, with a shaking hand, a darkening eye, a drowsy brain, and with all my faculties dropping from me one by one... do for the cause of God and man, for the progress of human emancipation, for the suppression of the African slave-trade? Yet my conscience presses me on; let me die but upon the breach.

John Quincy Adams set out to save the American republic and ensure his own glory at the same time. By setting off the sparks that Abraham Lincoln would soon blow into fire, Adams may have done both.

Richard Samuelson has a post-doctoral fellowship at Liberty Fund, where he is writing a book on the Adamses.

Henry Adams

BY CHRISTOPHER FLANNERY

Improvement of the World, A Biography of Henry Adams: His Last Life, 1891-1918, by Edward Chalfant. Archon Books, 721 pages, \$55

Henry Adams: The Historian as Political Theorist, by James P. Young. University Press of Kansas, 324 pages, \$35

BOTH THESE BOOKS, IN VERY DIFFERENT ways, serve a good purpose: they give their readers reasons to be more interested in the interesting American who is their common subject. Young offers a sober and earnest, if uninspired, interpretation of Henry Adams's distinctively American political thought as found in his major writings. Adams's works have become so much the property of English departments that it is useful to be reminded that he had serious political thoughts and that his major works are full of them.

Chalfant is as inspired as Young is earnest. He is inspired as the ancient *rhapsodes* were inspired: he makes stuff up and is proud of it. And it can be entertaining for anyone who has an interest in Henry Adams. Chalfant's book is packed with pretentious and often engaging detail and conjecture, almost hour-by-hour, about how the ideas and feelings of Henry Adams came to him and got into print — or did not get into print — in the last 25 or so years of his life. As Chalfant tells his readers, "my principal interest is in great stories," and he tells some whoppers.

To come to grips with Henry Adams and his place in American history, one must, of course, follow the lead of these books and turn to the man himself and his works. Adams was born in 1838, two years after the death of James Madison. He died in 1918, when Ronald Reagan was seven years old. In his active and productive life, he wrote political journalism, scholarly essays, biography, novels, and a voluminous history of early 19th-century America, in addition to the two books that later generations have found less easy to categorize but more inviting to read: *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1913) and *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918). He also dabbled in poetry and even wrote a history of Tahiti. His extensive life-long correspondence is regarded by some as the most interesting collection of American letters on record.

Adams traveled prodigiously throughout his life and lived many years abroad, paying thoughtful and often studious and systematic attention to what he observed and recording his observations in private and published writings. He was a voracious researcher and reader, who knew as much as any American of his time about American history and world affairs. He tells us that he "passed the best years of his

SEE ADAMS ON PAGE 21

Gilligan Unbound: Pop Culture in the Age of Globalization, by Paul A. Cantor.
Rowman & Littlefield, 255 pages, \$27.95

EVERY BOOK SHOULD HAVE A THESIS, AND this one most assuredly does. Stated in every chapter (almost on every page) are three ideas: 1) Since the early 1960s the world has gone “from the Americanizing of the globe to the globalizing of America”; 2) Globalization has all but rendered the nation-state obsolete; and 3) The broader ramifications of these historic changes are significantly, even profoundly reflected in American popular culture, specifically in four long-running TV shows: *Gilligan’s Island* (1964-1967); the first *Star Trek* series (1966-1969); *The Simpsons* (1990-present); and *The X-Files* (1993-2002).

Cantor, who teaches English at the University of Virginia and is known for his scholarly work on Shakespeare and Romanticism, began in the 1980s to look seriously (though not, he would insist, too seriously) at popular culture. He’s hardly the only professor to have done so. But unlike his peers in the social sciences, Cantor does not study “media effects” such as the correlation between media violence and crime. And unlike his peers in the humanities, he does not take a heavily theoretical approach. While conceding a certain legitimacy to “the theory of subversion/containment associated with ... Foucault,” he is concerned less with “the effect of particular TV programs on society” than with seeing TV shows as “artistic forms that embody and express distinctive views of the world.” In other words, it is choice, not naiveté, that prompts Cantor’s free-hand linking of popular entertainment with larger literary-philosophical themes.

To trace these connections well is to carry off a high-wire act. Cantor succeeds best when the intellectual baggage he brings to bear is in fact related to the popular material he writes about. For example, when discussing the use of Shakespeare in the feature film *Star Trek IV*, he shows persuasively how the *Star Trek* concept of Earth-based republicanism colonizing warrior-aristocratic planetary empires is enriched when lines from *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar* issue from the lips of a doomed Klingon general. At the same time, Cantor warns that this motley manner of quoting the Bard threatens to reduce him to “postmodern pastiche.”

Cantor is most irresistible when his lightly worn erudition leavens our appreciation of truly brilliant entertainments, such as *The Simpsons*. If Aristotle was right in relating comedy to democracy, then it should come as no surprise that the best show on Cantor’s list is an animated sitcom. Reading Cantor on *The Simpsons*, one feels he could easily go native and start spit-balling ideas in Studio City (I mean that as a compliment). His own wit scintillates in this account of his “methods”:

“My general readers, who are mainly interested in what I have to say and not in how I am going about saying it, may feel free to skip this section. My academic readers will probably conclude that I am epistemologically



Top of the World, Skipper!

naive no matter what I say. Now that nobody is reading, I feel ready to proceed.”

One wishes to trust Cantor, even when he stretches one’s cultural prejudices by quoting Nietzsche and Kant in connection with *The Simpsons*: “In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche felt he had put his finger on Kant’s joke: ‘Kant wanted to prove in a way that would puzzle all the world that the world was right — that was the private joke of his soul. He wrote against the learned on behalf of the prejudice of the common people, but for the learned and not for the common people.’ In Nietzsche’s terms, *The Simpsons* goes *The Critique of Pure Reason* one better: It defends the common man against the intellectuals, but in a way that both the common man and the intellectual can understand and enjoy.”

But regrettably this is the high point in a book that elsewhere uses Procrustean methods to sustain what amounts to an *idée fixe*. For example, Cantor contrasts *Gilligan’s Island* and the first *Star Trek* series in the light of “the end of history” as projected by Hegel, Kojève, and Francis Fukuyama. To repeat, it is provocative to view the starship Enterprise as devoted to the intergalactic export of unheroic American democracy. But when Cantor piles the same world-historical baggage atop the bumbling Gilligan and three fellow castaways (the skipper, the millionaire, and the pointy-headed professor), the argument falls with a thud.

It would be unfair to compare Cantor to a

cultural theorist grinding away at the late-capitalist-imperialistic-hegemonic ideology inscribed in a Donald Duck cartoon (to cite one eminent example from the literature). For one thing, Cantor is fun to read. But like the cultural theorists, Cantor tends to become smitten with his own abstractions to the point of using them as a standard of aesthetic value.

Cultural theorists eschew “value judgments,” of course. But that doesn’t stop them from making them, usually on the basis of how well a given “text” exemplifies their theory. Cantor doesn’t go this far astray; he knows better than to strike the pose of Marxist-Freudian pseudo-scientific detachment. But in the chapter on *The X-Files*, his enthusiasm for grand abstractions overwhelms his good taste.

“*The X-Files* is an unusually thoughtful and thought-provoking television program,” begins Cantor. “The more I have studied it, the more I have been impressed by the consistency of its engagement with and exploration of a set of serious and central concerns.” Thus girded, Cantor plunges into a lengthy account of *The X-Files* that soon becomes as tortuous and (after 90 pages) as tedious as the show itself.

The X-Files had a curious birth: when first presented to the Fox network in 1993, it was summarily axed, only to be hastily revived after a programming executive noticed that a test audience had given it a record high rating. Especially in the beginning, the program had

a novel and distinct allure: its shadowy look, its haunting soundtrack, its cold stylized acting, and the hints of profundity glinting through its famously convoluted plots, attracted viewers and, over time, a cult following. But to treat this confection as a thoughtful, consistent exploration of any serious topic is to abandon argument for augury.

Along with globalization and the end of the nation-state, Cantor would have us believe that *The X-Files* is about immigration. After all, the show’s original conceit is that aliens (meaning extraterrestrials) are conquering Earth with the help of the U. S. government. Noting that “alien” also refers to non-citizens, Cantor launches into a series of assertions about the nature of the immigrant experience and the definition of American nationhood and citizenship that sound embarrassingly like something an undergraduate might say when trying to impress a politically correct professor.

For example, we are told that “like an extraterrestrial being, an immigrant is perceived to be alien to the American way of life and hence a threat to its preservation.” Indeed, *The X-Files* is praised for sympathetically linking the extraterrestrial with the immigrant, thereby revealing the degree to which the latter appears “a monster, or at least monstrous in the eyes of ordinary U.S. citizens.”

Continuing in the same hyperbolic vein (and, I might add, with remarkable indifference to the way an immigrant reader might feel about being equated with a little green space critter), Cantor praises *The X-Files* for focusing on “the hybrid character of the immigrants” and for including a plot line “centered around a scheme to create an alien-human hybrid.” This is good, in his view, because it “rejects conventional nationalist ideologies” — and after all, “nationalism rests on simplistic polarizations between *us* and *them* and above all develops a notion of distinct national identity, often based on ideas of cultural homogeneity, monolingualism, and even racial purity.”

One wonders what country Cantor has been living in all this time. And it doesn’t help that a few pages later he refers to America’s “ideal of open borders.” Not sharing his taste for suggestive incoherence, I will venture no further than to ask why a country that regards immigrants as “monstrous” and defines its nationhood in terms of “simplistic polarizations between *us* and *them*” would have an “ideal of open borders.”

In the end, Cantor’s attempt to link these four TV programs to the themes of globalization and the end of the nation-state feels contrived, not to mention repetitive. By flogging these hobbyhorses to excess, he loses track of what makes him a refreshing exception to the rule of academicians writing about popular culture: his willingness to treat its better products as artistic expressions in their own right, rather than as barometers of this or that social-political-economic trend.

Martha Bayles is a professor of literature at Claremont McKenna College and author of *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (Free Press, 1994).

Delighting in the Great Books

BY JAMES SEATON

Smiling Through the Cultural Catastrophe: Toward the Revival of Higher Education, by Jeffrey Hart. Yale University Press, 288 pages, \$26.95

IN *SMILING THROUGH THE CULTURAL Catastrophe*, Jeffrey Hart, like Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind* and Harold Bloom in *The Western Canon*, reaffirms the intellectual and spiritual authority of the great books of the West. Unlike the two (unrelated) Blooms, Hart, true to his title, chooses to emphasize enjoyment rather than critique, barely mentioning the "catastrophe" that has swept aside the humanistic criteria of truth, beauty, and goodness in favor of the sociological categories of class, race and gender. The criticisms launched by the two Blooms are almost entirely warranted, of course, but they tend to overshoot the mark. Harold Bloom's limits the appeal of the great books to those on "the quest for a transcendence of limits," leaving someone merely trying to cope with the world without a reason to bother with Shakespeare. Similarly, Allan Bloom limits the proper (though not exclusive) audience of great works to the "small number" who "spend their lives in an effort to be autonomous."

In contrast to the implicit message of the two Blooms, Hart is willing to suppose that great books, if given a chance, may speak to more than a chosen few. He cautions, "It would be wise not to underestimate the general human intelligence but to try to extend genuine education as widely as possible." Hart identifies the genius of the West with its ability to hold on to two often conflicting ideals: "the goal of spiritual aspiration" and "the aspiration to cognition." Following a long tradition, Hart identifies the former with Jerusalem and the latter with Athens. Though disclaiming originality, his discussions of the Bible, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, the Enlightenment, and the novel in terms of the

tension between these opposing ideals is not only generally persuasive but insightful. Thus, he shows that the Bible is not only the embodiment of "Jerusalem" but also includes as a kind of counterpoint, from Genesis through the New Testament, the voice of "Athens" as well. Hart demonstrates that "you cannot get past the first line of the Hebrew Bible without sensing the presence of radical questioning." Like the Hebrew people, "the narrative throughout is, so to speak, stiff-necked and quarrelsome." On the other hand, Hart also finds "Jerusalem" in the works of the West's secular masters, including Plato and even Shakespeare.

Against those who agree with the view George Santayana expressed in his essay "The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare," Hart suggests that "Shakespeare's plays can be read as a single long poem expressive of damnation, purgation, and, in the late comedies, salvation" — a suggestion supported by Hart's readings of both *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*. His reading of *Hamlet* profits from his willingness to reconsider the play in the light both of Mel Gibson's film version and of *The Great Gatsby*. Mel Gibson's "happy inspiration of attributing to Hamlet a small scientific laboratory in the castle" vivifies Hart's sense of a Hamlet who is a citizen of the Renaissance — both a believer in ghosts and a student of the new scientific ideas. And our understanding of *Hamlet* as well as *The Great Gatsby* is enriched by Hart's comparison of the stoic Horatio before the body of Hamlet uncharacteristically envisioning "flights of angels," to the final, similarly uncharacteristic eloquence of Nick Carraway thinking of "the fresh green breast of the New World," as he, like Horatio, responds to the death of a friend who has given him intimations of a larger world.

Voltaire scarcely appears in either *Closing of the American Mind* or *The Western Canon*, but *Candide* receives an extended discussion in *Smiling Through the Cultural Catastrophe*. For Hart the Voltaire of *Candide* is not the enemy of Leibnitz or Christianity, but of

"junk thought." It is "the process of intellectual devolution — vulgarization, dumbing-down" that "evokes Voltaire's scorn in the figure of Dr. Pangloss, who certainly has not read Pope or Leibnitz but, at best, only some popular pamphlets that misrepresent them." Honoring Voltaire's point, Hart acknowledges the stature of thinkers whose professed disciples have contributed much to the "junk thought" undermining the heritage Hart is reclaiming: "What John Dewey actually thought about education is unrecognizable in his popularizers. The thought of Nietzsche exists in the popular mind only in caricature. Few people actually read Freud, but everyone 'knows' what he said."

On both the left and the right, a good many intellectuals have attacked the "enlightenment project" as the source of all that is wrong with the modern world, but Hart points out that the Enlightenment's "most trenchant critics, from Swift and Burke through Dostoyevsky, have had to put such criticism in terms laid down by the Enlightenment itself. That is, they have had to argue their case, not merely assume it, and appeal to fact, reason, and experience." Firmly condemning the wing of the enlightenment that wanted to end the creative tension between Athens and Jerusalem, Hart finds the moderate Enlightenment of Montesquieu, Samuel Johnson and *Candide* "indispensable."

Although, the critiques of Allan Bloom and Harold Bloom, like those of John Ellis in

Literature Lost or Frederick Crews in *Skeptical Engagements*, are both welcome and necessary, the revival of the humanities will be achieved primarily through a renewed capacity for intellectual wonder and delight. This renewed capacity will require the cultivation of another quality. Though noting with Dante that books can do evil as well as good, Hart concludes by suggesting that the truth and beauty of great works makes ultimately for their goodness, as well, since immersion in them promotes the capacity for fairness and impartial judgment. Proudly echoing Matthew Arnold, George Santayana, and Lionel Trilling, Jeffrey Hart champions a "condition of mind" that post-modernism has defined out of existence: disinterestedness. He makes his case with an eloquence backed by the example of his own fine book:

The very power of the important books works to make their readers fair-minded. It demands that the books be heard. The reader experiences the desire to come up to their power of mind. You listen to them, putting aside your own opinions, desires, and causes. . . . This amounts to the cultivation of fairness, or disinterestedness, and it attacks the fortress of every provincialism.

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LIBERALISM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

ungovernable. And for the far-left, the culture war serves as a nice substitute for the Cold War of their fathers, providing endless rationales for government growth.

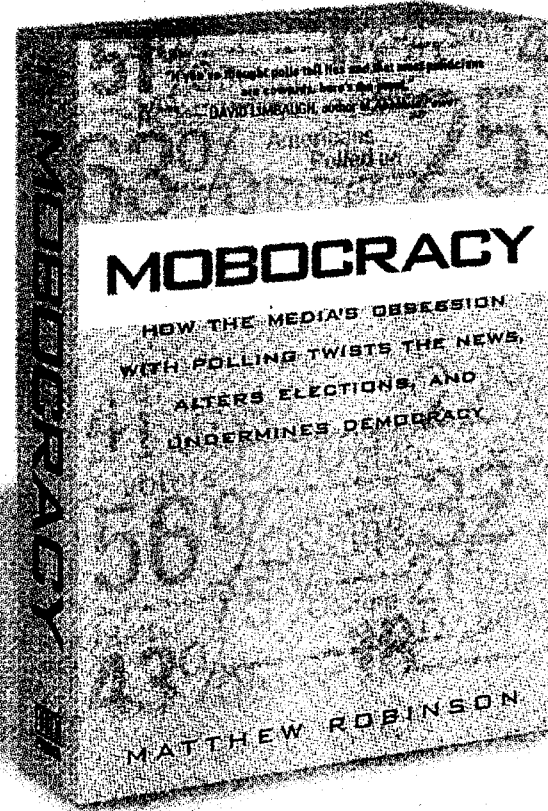
If, in the end, Brands's thesis is wrong that liberalism was a short-run anomaly, still there is something in his claims worth taking to heart. His argument might be described as simply a fancy version of Randolph Bourne's famous phrase that "war is the health of the state." Brands finished his book before September 11, so it is ironic to read his closing judgments: "[A]nother serious threat to American security would be required to displace [public] skepticism. . . in the presence of a renewed security threat, the liberals will once again be called to power."

This is precisely the prospect that has cheered liberals since September 11, as polls have found public confidence in Washington at levels not seen in more than

30 years. Some liberals have forthrightly declared that they're back in business. Brands would not be so certain; the war on terror would need to be an unqualified success for public confidence in government to wax. Afghanistan may have gone well, but the government's bureaucratic approach to domestic security is likely to reinforce the skepticism of centralized government that has hobbled large liberal initiatives. Instead of effective security, we are getting the domestic equivalent of Vietnam, which was liberalism's undoing. Brands's book may be delightful mischief, but concerning the necessity of government to be effective in its objects, he is without illusion or contrivance.

Steven F. Hayward is senior fellow at the Pacific Research Institute in San Francisco, and author of *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (Prima, 2001).

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A Bad Case for Big Government

BY JOHN J. PITNEY, JR.

What Government Can Do: Dealing With Poverty and Inequality, by Benjamin I. Page and James R. Simmons. University of Chicago Press, 409 pages, \$29

LIBERALS SOMETIMES WRITE SERIOUS books that challenge conservatives to refine our arguments and think more deeply about our principles. *What Government Can Do* is not one of these books. Though its authors are prestigious professors (Page at Northwestern, Simmons at Wisconsin), and its endnotes groan with scholarly citations, the book is surprisingly simplistic and often simply wrong.

Three times the authors quote a famous Lincoln line to support their main premise: "that government for the people entails, among other things, policies that greatly reduce the extent of poverty and economic inequality." These repeated invocations imply that Lincoln would have backed their agenda of mammoth increases in domestic spending and steep tax hikes for "the rich." They picked the wrong man to quote. Lincoln clearly distinguished economic opportunity from economic leveling, or as he said on March 6, 1860: "I take it that it is best for all to leave each man free to acquire property as fast as he

can. Some will get wealthy. I don't believe in a law to prevent a man from getting rich; it would do more harm than good."

They even quote the Preamble to the Constitution, that government should "promote the general welfare." In this respect, they come across as an academic version of Beavis and Butthead: "Heh, heh, heh ... They said WELFARE!" A more mature interpretation of the Framers' meaning would have taken account of what Madison wrote. The "first object of government," he explained in *The Federalist*, is the "protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property."

Page and Simmons's use of data is no more convincing than their quotesmanship. The economic growth of the 1980s and '90s undercuts the notion of widespread American squalor, so they note "offsetting costs that do not show up in dollar terms," such as the loss of leisure that people incur when they work harder. A few pages later, though, they define poverty in dollar terms alone. If they were consistent, Page and Simmons would have adjusted for the increased leisure available to the jobless, since a wealth of free time would presumably "offset" a shortage of money.

Moreover, they define poverty not as a matter of actual need but relative economic standing. According to survey data, they claim, Americans think that anyone who makes much

less than the median income is poor. Such a definition is convenient for those who want to perpetuate high levels of welfare spending. If "the poor" consist of the lowest-earning 20 percent, then it's a good bet that one out of every five Americans will always be poor.

Page and Simmons assert that countries with high levels of equality, such as Japan and Germany, tend to outgrow countries with unequal incomes, such as Australia and the United States. Their source for this claim is an old study that relies on older data. They could have easily retrieved more recent numbers from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's website (www.oecd.org). Between 1995 and 2000, both the United States and Australia saw gross domestic product grow by 24 percent. Germany grew by only nine percent and Japan only seven percent. (I look forward to a second, revised edition with the word "oops.")

When discussing specific proposals, they flunk the threshold test of genuine policy analysis: a frank appraisal of tradeoffs. Is Social Security heading for deficits? Easy, just raise taxes. Health care? Simple, just adopt a Canadian-style single-payer system. Unemployment? Guarantee everyone a good job at a good wage, with government as an employer of last resort. Page and Simmons never take seriously the idea that such moves

might damage economic growth and private-sector job creation — has been the case in the very countries they cite as models. They also overlook other serious costs. Canadians may have good access to routine care, but they pay for it with long waiting lists at hospitals.

As for unequal educational outcomes, they say, "the obvious answer is some form of affirmative action." Like most advocates of racial preferences, they cannot admit that discrimination in favor of one group necessarily means discrimination against others. Neither can they acknowledge the absurdities of racial classification itself. The Census Bureau defines race as a matter of self-identification, but the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission tells employers not to ask job applicants about their racial identity. So how can companies tell who belongs to what group? There's some literature on how to classify people by appearance, but no one has updated it in more than a decade. Besides, it's all written in Afrikaans.

THE DISCUSSION OF EDUCATION HAS A revealing gap. The authors ignore the most successful federal education program of all — the G.I. Bill of Rights. This measure opened college doors for millions of World War II veterans, leading to the expansion of existing insti-

SEE GOVERNMENT ON PAGE 21

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DEMOCRACY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

were such deadly weapons — from the hoplite panoply to the A-bomb — usually in the hands of Westerners?

THE EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC EDGE DID NOT result from the superior brainpower of Western peoples. Nor was this technological dynamism due to accidents, germs, natural resources, or simple theft. To be sure, the Western world stole, borrowed, or adapted everything from gunpowder to stirrups from its adversaries. But the critical point is not the mere presence in the West of such brilliant inventions — the products of individual genius the world over — but their continual improvement, practical application, and the wide dissemination of the knowledge surrounding weapon production.

Free societies in the West possessed far fewer political or religious scruples about the consequences of the introduction of new weaponry — which is so often disruptive of custom, tradition, and religion. Gunpowder had been a rather impractical amusement in China, but when transferred to the West it quickly was transformed by all classes and peoples into deadly instruments for killing — the only logic of gunpowder procurement hinging on its proven excellence on the battlefield. In this regard, capitalism — in its most fundamental sense of free markets, private property, profit and loss, dividend and interest going back to the Greeks — when married to secular government and free inquiry ensured a constant arms race in the West, as inventors, fabricators, and traders all sought to craft cheaper and more deadly weapons than their rivals — the ethical,

cultural, and religious consequences of such breakthroughs be damned.

Finally, the freedom to criticize government also brings enormous dividends during wartime — albeit rarely seen as such in the ongoing fire of battle. Not only do politicians, journalists, and pundits of every stripe carefully publicize military operations — sometimes to the detriment of the war effort itself — but their group wisdom results in sound advice to the generals. The closely related notion of civilian audit of the military is also a uniquely Western idea that is a dividend of democracy. It is hard to recall a single Greek general in any city-state — Athens, Thebes, or Sparta — who was at one time not fined, exiled, executed, or jailed. Those commanders with the most impressive records on the battlefield — Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, Lysander, and Epaminondas — all were dragged into court to answer auditors (whether keen or stupid) about their military record. These checks and balances were known in advance and served to remind generals that their record was subject to public discussion and to prevent any from usurping power. Fabius Maximus, Cortés, and General MacArthur all clashed with their superiors and their governments — and all ended up angry and unhappy at the expiration of their abbreviated tenure.

Nonetheless, group discipline, free-thinking soldiers, civic militarism, superior weapons, and free speech have not ensured that on every occasion Western armies would win. Given the nature of war, it was inevitable that Western armies would often be caught outnumbered far from home, led by incompetents, and beset by disease and poor logistics. Indeed the litany of Western defeats from

Lade, the Teutoburger Wald, Manzikert, and Isandhlwana, to Little Big Horn, Adowa, and Pearl Harbor attests to this occasional vulnerability. But freedom allowed Western commanders a greater margin of error, the opportunity in the long run to trump bad weather, insufficient numbers, geniuses like Crazy Horse or idiots like Custer — hence the frequency with which even dramatic defeats remained temporary setbacks, not permanent catastrophes.

HAVE ANY OF THESE AGE-OLD WESTERN democratic advantages come into play in the present war? Nearly all of them have, and they suggest — if we remain true to our ideals and if our cause continues to be just — that despite the gloomy prognoses of our pessimistic cultural elite, America will defeat utterly its foes and stamp out terrorism, even if such battles transpire on the other side of the globe and pose logistical and tactical nightmares.

Already we have seen the U.S. Congress meet to vote emergency funding for a host of new forces and deployments — funds available only because an open and free market protects, raises, and disburses capital. From our GPS-guided bombs to our laptops in the field, it is clear that MIT and Cal Tech give us advantages undreamed of in the Islamic world. Our soldiers, from every class and background, have been mobilized, according to statute and without any sense of illegality — in sharp contrast to the wretched villagers who were rounded up by the Taliban at gunpoint to serve as cannon fodder against American bombs. Pundits from the *Nation* to the *National Review* have not been shy about informing the public and their government that we have either done too little or too much, been too bellicose or too tame, too eager or too

reluctant to bomb our enemies. And out of that cacophony our military has listened, distilled criticism, and thereby at times altered strategy and tactics both — the entire time ensuring Americans that it is not running the war for its own pleasure.

Most impressive, however, has been the spirit of free soldiers. The first sign came with the passengers United Flight 93; before storming the hijackers, they voted freely on their audacious plan, and then ensured that their own lives would not be agents for the deaths for others. The firemen and policemen at Ground Zero in New York within hours of the disaster were crafting ways to climb into the bent steel and smoldering concrete to rescue their own. And the professionalism and élan of our soldiers ensured that for all the mullahs' whips, nooses, and threats, their men, not ours, would break first in battle.

Most scholars, of course, are reluctant to accept such broad generalizations across time and space, ever eager to protect their own small academic fiefdoms. And we must confess that in the present age of multiculturalism and cultural relativism, the very idea that freedom and the love of truth could create a society not only qualitatively different but also superior on the battlefield is jarring.

Let the academics quibble. But in the meantime let us also learn from history and in that light ponder the American military's impressive — though not unanticipated — feats since the events of September 11, 2001.

Victor Davis Hanson is a professor of classics at California State University, Fresno, and author most recently of *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (Doubleday, 2001).

VICTORY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

that the Philippine and Somali operations would make America safer than operations against Iraq or the Palestine Authority — just that it was more comfortable doing one thing rather than another.

Dancing Around Wolves

In war, however, true comfort comes only from defeating the enemy. Taking comfort from the deaths of recruits to the enemy's cause is a short-term illusion. The terrorists' chief weapon is the will to attack, and they will attack so long as their causes have hope and credit. That hope and that credit is embodied by regimes, and success or failure is defined by the fate of regimes. On the anniversary of the Persian Gulf War in January, Saddam Hussein gave yet another speech to the Arab world, credibly claiming that America's power had dwindled in 11 years and would surely drop further. He has allowed acolytes to praise him on Arab TV for the success of September 11. As it became clear that the post-September 11 U.S. government was no more capable of mustering the will to topple him than had its predecessors, Hussein

sat firmly in the saddle. He warned the Arab world that its chief preoccupation would have to be satisfying the demands of the warriors being mobilized in the great anti-American struggle.

The Saudi regime got the message. Those who follow the region's affairs have always known that the impotent, faction-ridden, terminally corrupt Saudi regime has stayed a step ahead of internal implosion and external attack by paying ransom to the threat *du jour*. Thus the Saudis have fed the Iraqi regime and the Palestinian movement that bit them, as well as the Islamist movement within its own borders. Saudis recruited by Iraq or other anti-American and anti-Saudi regimes but financed by the royal family have been in the forefront of anti-American terrorism. Yet the Saudi regime has enjoyed U.S. support resulting from its many friendships in America, many bought and paid for. Now, however, the threats from Iraq and other anti-American forces are so strong, and support from America against those threats so irrelevant, that the House of Saud is being forced to cut its ties with America — with as little disruption as it can manage. This, of course, is likelier to speed its overthrow than to retard it.

What matters is that keeping Saudi Arabia "on our side" — in practice, allowing the Saudi regime to be on both sides at

once — has been terribly important to U.S. policy. For the sake of not upsetting the Saudis, the first Bush administration did not finish off the Iraqi regime in 1991, and for that sake the current Bush administration decided that the "war on terrorism" would not be waged against any Arab country. Considering that America's attackers are almost 100 percent Arab, this amounts to beating around the bush, if not the bushes dancing around the wolves — in any case, nothing serious, like war.

Declaring Victory on Life Support

America is at war to establish the kind of peace in which we can live American lives. While the U.S. government's actions abroad thus far have not had serious consequences on America's enemies, the U.S. government's actions at home have had consequences at once serious and laughable. There are checkpoints, and not just at airports, where the people doing the checking are more likely to be terrorists than those being checked. Moreover, because of political correctness, old ladies are being searched while young Arab men are not. Washington D.C. is a fortress. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman half joked that the next step in security will be for passen-

gers to fly naked. Nakedness will not suffice, however, to prevent the smuggling of biological warfare powders. For that, body cavity checks would be required. And then there is the fact that with all the armed security personnel around, the easiest way to penetrate the security is to forge credentials or just buy uniforms. In the few instances in which persons have tried to penetrate these security systems, they have succeeded.

Nevertheless, Homeland Security Czar Tom Ridge and Attorney General John Ashcroft staked much on the gratuitous prediction that the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City will be terror-free because the U.S. government is spending \$400 million on the *dernier cri* in security programs. Just one terrorist success, and the aura vanishes.

By forgoing attempts to defeat the causes of anti-American terrorism as well as the regimes that support those causes, and by placing its bets on security measures, the government has endangered not only America's security but her liberty.

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Leading and Leadership, edited by Timothy Fuller. Notre Dame University Press, 264 pages, \$15

LOVE, TEACHING, WORK, AND DEATH ARE subjects of the other volumes in the Ethics of Everyday Life series, published by the University of Notre Dame Press. Each contains a variety of readings, from ancient and contemporary sources, reaching across cultures and disciplines. Each has a distinguished editor or editors — Leon and Amy Kass, Mark Schwehn, Gilbert C. Meilaender, and Fr. Richard John Neuhaus. These are volumes rich in instruction.

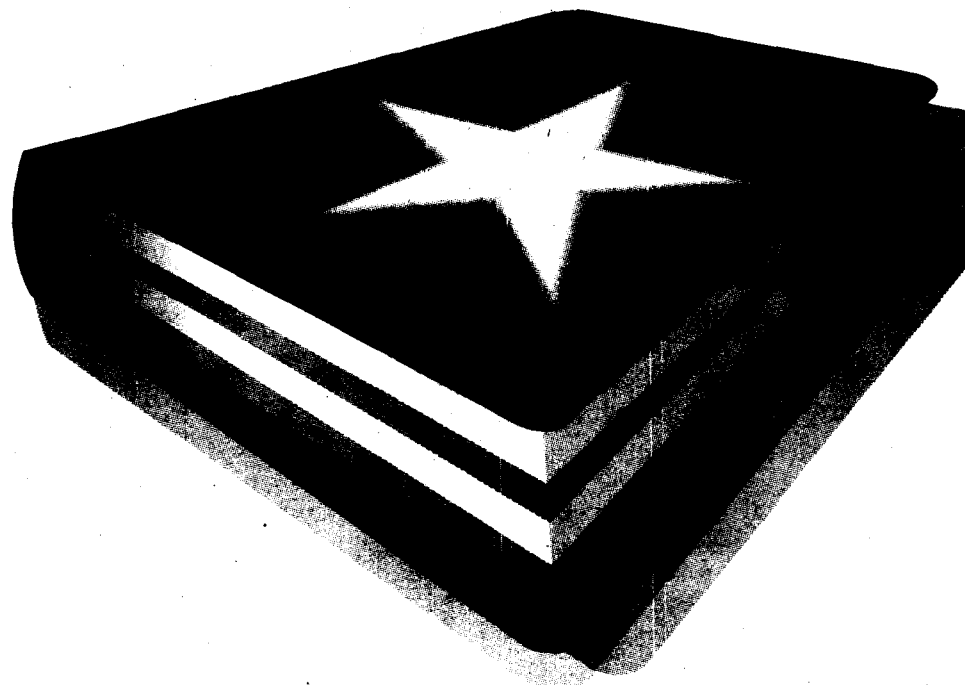
Editor Timothy Fuller proceeds from the “premise ... that we must become more thoughtful and more philosophical about the meaning of leadership.” That the volume is not one on citizenship — hence no readings from Aristotle — is already a cause for concern. It is also the most secular volume of the series. But Fuller’s carefully chosen selections let us rise above the vulgar *Führer prinzip*: “seek to be worthy of recognition,” sage counsel from Confucius, begins the volume. Sections on classical, heroic, democratic, and contemporary leadership follow. Readers will see that the “more philosophical” approach to leadership turns it into a question of statesmanship, and then of political philosophy. So understood, the mundane points to the wonderful. —Ken Masugi

The Founders’ Almanac: A Practical Guide to the Notable Events, Greatest Leaders & Most Eloquent Words of the American Founding, edited by Matthew Spalding. The Heritage Foundation, 352 pages, \$10.95

George Washington: Foundation of Presidential Leadership and Character, edited by Ethan Fishman, William D. Pederson, and Mark J. Rozell. Praeger, 250 pages, \$65

THESE COLLECTIONS REMIND US THAT THE study of the American Founders has both popular and scholarly purposes. The volume edited by Matthew Spalding is designed for the serious beginning student of the American Founding as well as those who wish simply to ransack the Founders’ wisdom for immediate practical use (e.g., adorning a speech with quotations). In addition to apt quotations, a calendar of events, basic documents, and essays by scholars such as Steven Forde, Mackubin Owens, Bradley Thompson, Colleen Sheehan, Dorothea Wolfson, and Spalding himself make this a most useful reference work for teachers, students, and professors.

The Ethan Fishman et al. book contains a range of essays, uneven in quality, by new and venerable George Washington scholars,



including William Allen, Kent Kirwan, Glenn Phelps, Colleen Shogan, and Spalding. Allen’s essay on “The Foreign Policy of Republicanism” contains a useful resume of and commentary on the Farewell Address, in addition to reflection on the teaching of distinguished Claremont McKenna College international relations professor Harold W. Rood. Fishman and other essayists take seriously the Aristotelian prudence displayed in Washington, whose example helps to inspire both of these volumes. —KM

Free Market Environmentalism (revised edition), by Terry L. Anderson and Donald R. Leal. Palgrave, 251 pages, \$18.95

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WALT DISNEY took over the management of the Grand Canyon? Far from a horror show, the result might be better for those seriously concerned with preserving that natural treasure. “Free market environmentalism emphasizes the importance of market processes in getting more human value from any given stock of resources.” On the whole, argue Anderson and Leal of the Political Economy Research Center, markets and property rights make far better protectors of the environment than government regulation. They muster example after example of how an attention to the rationality of the market and respect for property rights would have produced a far better result (e.g., fishery preservation) than government policies generated by political pressure groups, ideological rigidity, or regulatory inertia. In this subtly argued work, environmental policies ranging from recycling to international agreements come under enlightened scrutiny. —KM

Mobocracy: How the Media’s Obsession with Polling Twists the News, Alters Elections and Undermines Democracy, by Matthew Robinson. Prima Publishing, 366 pages, \$24.95

MASS-MEDIA POLLING IS JUSTIFIABLY SKEW-ered in this spirited work by Matthew Robinson, managing editor of the conservative weekly *Human Events* and an adjunct fellow of the Claremont Institute. He begins with the abuses of polling and ends with a stout defense of the American Constitution and the statesmanship and political journalism that helped launch and legitimize it.

Mobocracy provides a multitude of recent examples of liberal journalists’ and Democratic politicians’ manipulation of public opinion through polling (including a shrewd, no-holds-barred account of the Clinton impeachment coverage). The primary objective of their manipulation, Robinson argues, is to validate a big-government political agenda and to discredit the Republicans. Most pollsters presume (or pretend there exists) a rational, informed public, but their “dirty little secret” is that vast numbers of Americans know little or nothing about the issues on which they are polled. Hence, polls not only conceal widespread public ignorance but actually feed it with flattery. Such citizens are easy prey for demagoguery.

Robinson ultimately demonstrates that America’s Founders were right in their judgment that the many cannot govern directly and that the only reasonable alternative is representative government in which they have the choice of rulers. *Mobocracy* is thus dialectical, beginning with a critical examination of the current frenzy of journalistic democracy and ultimately taking the reader back to the more sober view of the

Founders. It is an education in true self-government. —Richard H. Reeb, Jr.

William Mulholland and the Rise of Los Angeles, by Catherine Mulholland. University of California Press, 433 pages, \$35 (cloth) \$18.95 (paper)

FANS OF THE MOVIE “CHINATOWN” MAY wish to know more about the real Noah Cross, a.k.a. William Mulholland, as described by his granddaughter. We see the immigrant Irish engineer who designed and built the system that brought water to Los Angeles, allowing for its remarkable growth. Mulholland’s tenacity enabled him to become the Faust of southern California, draining distant lakes and turning a desert into a garden (called L.A. and Orange County). His endeavor parallels the career of California Governor-turned-U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson, one of the major figures of Progressivism. More probing works are needed to reveal the founder behind the bureaucrat, but the example of Mulholland is the stuff for such speculation. —KM

A is for America: An American Alphabet, by Devin Scillian with illustrations by Pam Carroll. Sleeping Bear Press, 56 pages, \$22.95.

DEVIN SCILLIAN DEDICATES HIS BOOK TO “Mom, who taught me to love books, and Dad, who taught me to love my country.” For parents who want to do the same for their children, *A is for America* is a fine start.

In this abecedarian volume, children are introduced to the Liberty Bell, Bunker Hill, Chicago and Charlotte, Denver and Dallas, and fireworks on the Fourth of July, as well as Hershey Bars, Holiday Inns, and Huckleberry Finn — all seen in Pam Carroll’s colorful full-spread paintings.

Most of Scillian’s rhymes do tend to emphasize what is extraordinary about America. “I is indeed important, how America came to be. It’s the idea that an individual can insist on being free.” With “J,” “If not for Thomas Jefferson, where would we be today?” While “Abraham Lincoln gets all of L. It’s elementary you see. He held us all together and at the same time set us free.” Further on, we also meet Mickey Mantle, Norman Rockwell, Rosa Parks, and “Ulysses S. Grant in his Union uniform.” Even difficult letters succeed with “Q” for John Hancock’s quill and “X” to remind us of election day. Best of all, each letter includes a sidebar with additional facts on the subjects named. The book closes with the words to “The Star-Spangled Banner” and a detailed account of how it was written.

John Adams wrote that “children should be educated and instructed in the principles of freedom.” *A is for America* is one way to put them on the right track. —John B. Kienker

ADAMS

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life in pondering over the political philosophy of Jefferson, Gallatin, and Madison," and among the many other serious thinkers whom he felt obliged to engage in his writings were Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Bacon, Spinoza, Pascal, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, Marx, and Nietzsche. His wide-ranging investigations included a determined effort to understand science as a necessary method of explaining human — and American — history, and as the key problem of the contemporary human condition.

Adams was a professor of history at Harvard for several years, served as editor of the influential quarterly the *North American Review*, and was a reluctant president of the American Historical Association. But his official or formal positions were of far less significance than his informal and personal activities and relations. From earliest childhood to his death, he associated and corresponded with leading figures in politics, letters, and the arts. For decades he maintained a salon in Washington, D.C., where leading politicians, diplomats, and authors regularly socialized. He said of himself not as a boast but as a matter of fact: "Never in his life would he have to explain who he was."

IN HIS EARLY 20S, ADAMS EXPRESSED TO HIS brother Charles an ambition which, in various ways, he pursued throughout his life: "[W]hat we want, my dear boy, is a school. We want a national set of young men like ourselves or better, to start new influences not only in politics, but in literature, in law, in society, and throughout the whole social organism of the country. A national school of our own generation." Adams never gave up trying to "start new influences" in the American mind, his own included. For more than half a century he became a kind of school unto himself — headmaster, faculty, and member of the student body.

His early journalism tried to shape American opinion on the great issues of the day — secession, civil war, and political reform. His scholarly essays and books aimed at a different layer of opinion but were as purposeful, seeking, among other things, to establish a new ground for understanding American history. With his novels and his innovative works *Chartres* and the *Education* he sought to influence different audiences with his "literary art." His correspondence aimed not only at its contemporary recipients but at later generations who Adams well knew would be reading his mail; this private and personal mode of influence became especially characteristic of him.

His *Education* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1919, just a year after his death, and as the 20th century was coming to a close, Modern Library selected the *Education* as the century's Best Nonfiction Book in English. Whatever the ultimate merits of these honors, as measures of his influence they are confirmed by the publication of a new edition of his letters in the 1980s, the republishing of his major works by the Library of America in the same decade, and by the continuing scholarly interest in his work. Helping Adams in an informal, private

way to start new influences in yet another century, the president of Adams's alma mater encouraged the Harvard incoming class of 2004 to consider the "immense value" of reading Adams's *Education*.

IF ANYONE HAD A BIRTHRIGHT TO THE American legacy, it would seem to be Henry Adams. By nature and nurture Adams was, as he called himself, an "American of Americans." In the many high offices they held, his father, Charles Francis Adams, and his grandfather, John Quincy Adams, were faithful champions and guardians of those "revolution-principles" first espoused by his great-grandfather, John Adams, back in 1776. When Henry Adams was a young man, Abraham Lincoln already spoke of those principles in their authoritative American incarnation as our "ancient faith."

With great labor and devotion, those "revolution-principles" were faithfully passed down to Henry Adams through the generations as the most precious political inheritance. He took them with the utmost seriousness. The bloody Civil War fought over them was his first great lesson in politics. He remained attached to the world of those principles his whole life. But his attachment, however deep and even passionate, could ultimately be to him no more than "a matter of taste" or habit; as a matter of conviction, he felt himself, even as a Harvard student, "slipping away from" the "fixed principles" of his forefathers.

As the years passed, Adams increasingly came to see himself as abiding in a new world in which it was as impossible to believe in the "a priori" truths or "eighteenth century" ideas of his forefathers as it was to believe in the revealed truths of the medieval Church, or the incantations of a pagan priest in an ancient temple of Apollo.

All such "dogmas" belonged to an old world of which, because of the irresistible advance of modern science, Adams felt he could no longer be a part, and to which, in much of his writing, he is bidding heartbroken, if cavalier, farewell. It was not the "truth" of modern science that made it seem irresistible to Adams — science required more credulity of its devotees than did the mysteries of medieval faith. What made science irresistible was its sheer brute capacity to predict and therefore to command events. In the world that must submit to be explained, as it was to be commanded, by such science, truth must give way to "convenience."

Moral truth was no exception. Under the microscope of mechanistic science, all moral principles seemed to dissolve into mere "ideals." How his forefathers differed from 13th-century saints (or 5th-century BC philosophers) was in the end less important for Adams than how they resembled one another: they respected the authority of what Thomas Jefferson called simply "[t]he great principles of right and wrong." Adams's famous "education" led him to the point where "he knew no longer the good from the bad." Thus was Adams reluctantly driven to the point, so characteristic of later generations of educated Americans that he felt compelled to place between quotation marks, at least in his mind, any reference to a non-arbitrary standard of

moral judgment independent of human will — whether knowable through reason or revelation — by which an individual and a people might direct their choices and their destinies.

His "slipping away" from the ancient faith, both in general and in its peculiar American form, was momentous for Adams. Having abandoned the faith of his fathers, he would spend the rest of his life thinking through the necessity for and the consequences of having done so. All Adams's mature writings were in one way or another reflections on the historical, political, psychological, and philosophical dimensions of this problem. Among the more distasteful consequences, Adams saw clearly (well before the writing of his great *History of the United States during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison* [1889-91]) that, applied to human affairs, his science decided in the negative "the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice." In the world according to Adams the scientific historian, all is "accident and force," and an America understood in these terms could not, of course, be a nation that in any way might "vindicate the honor of the human race." The statesmanship of his great ancestors could and therefore must be explained in the same way one explains the twitchings of an insect or the formation of a crystal.

In both of Adams's novels (*Democracy* [1880], *Esther* [1884]), the main character is a woman looking for meaning in life — whether in politics, religion, or science — some ground of permanence in a world of flux. Neither finds it. It is nowhere to be found. But Adams the "literary artist" makes it clear that the most attractive characters will long for it, nonetheless. Adams, himself, having given up on the fixed principles of his forefathers, felt such a longing "to the last fibre of his being." It drew him helplessly toward mystical faith on the one hand and material determinism on the other—to the Virgin and the Dynamo, as recorded in his two most well-known books, *Chartres* and the *Education*. But he could no more consummate his longing than his Esther could allow herself to marry the clergyman she loved or the scientist who loved her. His thought is forever fecklessly suspended between the one thing needful and the forlorn insistence that it does not exist.

As epistolarian, journalist, novelist, historian, teacher, and literary artist, Adams explored the innumerable dimensions of this inexhaustible dilemma, and he let the world know that he had not concluded his explorations when he was gathered to his fathers, from whose ancient faith the ineluctable tendency of his thought had carried him away.

His extended and imaginative reflections proved to be early explorations of the paths that would be wandered by leading American intellectuals for the rest of the 20th century, paths which led away from the fixed principles of "nature and eternal reason" toward history and "change;" ultimately, as Adams was fully aware, to "chaos." A generation after Adams's death, a recent German immigrant asked of America: "Does this nation in its maturity still cherish the faith in which it was conceived and

raised?" The answer, as we know, so far as it concerned the most learned and privileged Americans, was not a resounding yes. Even those learned Americans who did still "adhere to the principles of the Declaration of Independence," had come for the most part — largely under the influence of German thought — to view these principles as "ideals" or "ideology" or "myth." Adams had anticipated these intellectuals by half a century and more, in part because, as his biographer suggests, he looked for his understanding of these principles "beyond the laws of nature and of God to the primeval forests of Germany." Adams also anticipated Leo Strauss in his conclusion that "the fundamental dilemma, in whose grip we are, is caused by the victory of modern natural science."

Adams was American in a way in which few if any of his contemporaries could be; and which has since become impossible. And yet, thanks to his education, he found it impossible to be an American in the most decisive sense, in the way exemplified by his great-grandfather and grandfather, a way available to "good and wise men of all ages."

Christopher Flannery is a professor of political science at Azusa Pacific University in California and a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute. Parts of this essay are adapted from "Henry Adams and our Ancient Faith," a chapter in the *History of American Political Thought*, edited by Bryan-Paul Frost and Jeffrey Sikkenga (Lexington Books, forthcoming.)

GOVERNMENT

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tutions and the establishment of others. (The first classes at Claremont McKenna College consisted mainly of veterans.) In this case, even the most hard-shell conservative has to admit that federal policy worked. So why do Page and Simmons pass up this debating point? The answer is that the G.I. Bill was essentially a voucher program, and if the approach did so much for colleges, it might also work for elementary and secondary schools. But since the authors spend several pages trying to cast doubt on vouchers, a discussion of the G.I. Bill would be "off message."

Of course, we have veterans in the first place because government has to defend the country against external threats. Not until page 211 do Page and Simmons get around to this rather important function, and their tone is dismissive. "Perhaps we could spend less on the military and more on long-starved 'discretionary' budget items for education and jobs." Such a proposition was silly even before September 11, 2001. By the end of the Clinton administration, the number of active-duty military personnel was at its lowest point since 1940.

So what can government do? More precisely, what is its proper function? For an answer, lay aside this book, turn on the news, and watch the latest actions of Americans in uniform.

John J. Pitney, Jr. is professor of government at Claremont McKenna College and author of *The Art of Political Warfare* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

Reason and Revelation at the Movies

BY KEN MASUGI

IN PLATO'S *APOLOGY*, SOCRATES DEFENDS A GROUP OF executed Athenian admirals as an example of why his justice is more reasonable than mob justice. Even though the admirals won a major victory over the Spartans, they failed to retrieve the bodies of Athenian sailors lost at sea. As punishment, the city put the admirals to death. In upholding law and justice, Socrates pitted his reason against the Athenians' irrational attachments to their sailors' corpses. Similarly, he maintained that the universal justice of political philosophy would defend his particular political community, opposing the sort of irrational practices that had built up in Athens over time.

Opening with a quotation from Plato on war, Ridley Scott's "Black Hawk Down" depicts U.S.-led effort in 1993 to impose order in a Somalia beset by famine and civil war. This specific episode of that little war seems to defy all reason. What was supposed to be a 30-minute hit-and-run raid to capture a warlord's lieutenants became a hellacious 17-hour firefight. The recovery of the bodies of fallen U.S. Army Rangers and Black Hawk helicopter pilots motivates a great portion of the action in the movie — "leave no man behind" is the moral premise, supported by helicopters and high-tech weaponry. The simplicity of that ethic has nightmarish consequences. All of the West's technological and military might is barely sufficient in the face of thousands of Kalishnikov-toting "skinnies," as the Somalis are called by their would-be protectors.

It should have been a one-sided fight. But with the Americans' rationalism come bureaucratic modes of battle-fighting under preposterous rules of engagement; a preference for shows of force over use of force, the commitment to international peace-keeping; and the Clinton Administration's obsession with "nation-building." These even the skinnies' odds considerably. Even Somali children know they can ridicule the American warriors.

While Americans curse their fate and babble bureaucratically, the most sophisticated character in the movie may be the Somali interrogator of a downed American helicopter pilot. When the American turns down the offer of a cigarette, the Somali remarks that of course Americans no longer smoke; they would rather live long and boring lives. The interrogator observes that even though the pilot is authorized to make war, he cannot negotiate. In Somalia, war is negotiation. He then reflects that Americans don't belong there — it's a Somali matter. His urbanity contrasts with the naïveté of the American discussion of the war, seen at the beginning of the film.

Americans exhibit their faults — braggadocio, superficiality, arrogance, sentimentality: The upper echelon of the military is a helpless bureaucracy, anesthetized from the battlefield's "fog of war" and "friction." These make the cunning and courage of the soldiers on the ground and in the air all the more credible, and necessary. We are driven from the comforts of technology to the reality of the body. We see the bodies shot, blown in half, mangled.

Like "Saving Private Ryan," "Black Hawk Down" drains the viewer. This movie about claiming bodies claims our body. Ridley Scott beats us into submission.

But the patriotism of "Private Ryan," with its thrusting of obligation upon us, is not present in "Black Hawk



Down." It combines the virtues of that unappreciated Vietnam movie, "Go Tell the Spartans", and of the better-known "Zulu." Like Scott's best film, "Bladerunner," it examines how men can overcome overwhelming odds to preserve themselves — whether against machines or against skinnies. As in "Gladiator," we must fight to preserve our humanity. Both films reveal the manly qualities, if not ruthlessness, required to preserve not merely life but a life worth living.

The West may boast of its rationality, its technology, and its efficiency. But it requires the raw courage of warriors to save its humanity. This is why Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg honored the fallen — for "the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

The fundamental difference between peoples lies in their regimes, the principles by which they live. The American regime requires reason, for we are a nation whose fundamental principle is the rational, self-evident truth of human equality. The lesson of "Black Hawk Down" is that without a proper understanding of that truth we will become just like the "skinnies."

The power and the radical limitations of the attenuated, Cartesian notion of human reason are vividly displayed in "A Beautiful Mind", which stars "Gladiator"'s Russell Crowe as economist and code-breaker John Nash. We see a man's attempt to mathematize the universe. But, in fact, the political needs of post-World War II America dominate Nash's life. Striving to reconcile the mathematical with the political, he goes mad. But love saves the disturbed economist who will later win the Nobel Prize. That the nerdish Nash could be played so well by "Maximus" Crowe shows how great and versatile an actor he really is.

Writers, however secular they may be, often make elaborate use of religious motifs. For example, Kazuo

Ishiguro's "Remains of the Day" (the film is a weak image of the novel) describes a kind of reverse Canterbury pilgrimage of a butler who drives west across England and talks to himself, seemingly uncomprehendingly, about his vacuous life. But does the pointed absence of religion mean that a religious resolution is being limned, emerging from the shadows, chiaroscuro-like? A more recent case, "American Beauty", was merely a boring diatribe against the American middle-class, unless one takes seriously the Christian symbols. But what is the producer-director's intent? One would have to take seriously the notion that the symbols of religion have a power of their own, and hence, they are not mere symbols.

One should keep this possibility in mind while enjoying the Joel and Ethan Coen's latest movie, "The Man Who Wasn't There." We see scam after scam, deceiving believers, spouses, juries, business partners, the nation. Any emotional attachment represents a possibility for exploitation. A priest appears to be raising the Host, which turns out to be a bingo number. The featured two-man barbershop has a trinity of chairs that is noted but never explained. As in other Coen brothers' films (e.g., "Miller's Crossing"), religious allusions abound. The resigned, purposeless life led by the barber-protagonist, played by Billy Bob Thornton, reminds us of Albert Camus' "The Stranger." Is the real "man who wasn't there" Jesus Christ? Their previous film, "Brother, Where Art Thou," is loosely based on the Odyssey — while lacking Odysseus's son, Telemachus. In that film, the New Deal and rural electrification appear to take the place of God. But what is the purpose of the recalling of religion, other than to tease and mock the audience? Could it be that the Coen brothers are fooling themselves?

Ken Masugi is director of the Claremont Institute's Center for Local Government.

Up In Smoke

BY BRADLEY C. S. WATSON

SMOKING IS THE LAST UNDEFENDED VICE. WHO among us will stand up for the much-maligned stogy? For the delicious aroma of black Cavendish burning in a cherrywood bowl? For the lowly cigarette? Let me come clean: my deep sympathies lie with the pipe and those who partake in its pleasures. Which is not to say I won't indulge in a cigar to celebrate in grand fashion, as my friends always do, Winston Churchill's birthday. And far be it from me to say that a cigar or even a cigarette is out of place before, during, or after any virtuous activity.

Indeed, the poor cigarette does not get its due. Not too long ago I studied philosophy in Belgium — a country which, the Belgians lamented, had some of the toughest smoking restrictions in Europe. This meant that students couldn't smoke in class during lectures (a restriction apparently not enforced against professors). Everywhere else was fair game, including right outside the doors of classrooms during breaks. Now when I think of Spinoza, or Heidegger, or a dozen other giants of the Western tradition, I think of thick palls of smoke engulfing the heads of graduate students, especially those North Americans who ironically had to travel to the Old World to satisfy their yearning to breathe free.

I should also make clear that although I don't mount my defense of smoking on health grounds, I don't for a moment believe I'm being irrational on that score. Haven't we discovered that the other wonder drug that works wonders — alcohol — is good for us? It was recently suggested that even salt is not necessarily as bad as we've been told.

When I lived in Los Angeles I was constantly bombarded by the television ads of a California fast food chain which boldly proclaimed that there is a word for men who don't love dripping, greasy cheeseburgers: the word is "losers." And so, I think, there is a word for men who — for reasons of pseudo-religious devotion rather than genuine choice — will not light up a cigar when the moment calls for it. The future as seen by Woody Allen in "Sleeper" will undoubtedly come to pass. What was down will be up, and even tobacco will be discovered to have health benefits. And if it doesn't, so be it.

My defense, after all, skillfully skirts this issue. It is based rather on my troglodytic sense that there are a few simple pleasures that individuals should be left alone to enjoy, free from the censure of meddlesome megalomaniacs with too much time on their hands. My defense is based also on romance, tradition, and memory. The pipe in particular is the natural choice for traditionalist conservatives, for it is so linked to the mystic chords of memory.

Who, early in his life, has not felt the romantic allure of smoking? What boy — for this is one area where I don't think I can speak for girls — has not been intoxicated by the smell of smoke pouring from a man — a real man — as he walked blissfully unaware of the youngster's presence? Smoking, especially the smoking of pipes and cigars, reminds us all of our first lessons in manliness; of what it meant to be something other than a boy and other than a girl. It reminds us of tweed jackets, deep voices, manual labor, brogues, fathers, grandfathers.

"The pipe is a trusted friend. Pipe smoking creates a common bond among all men."

I look wistfully at these introductory words from a mail order catalog designed exclusively for pipe smokers and involuntarily conjure exquisite aromas from my past. Almost everyone takes up pipe smoking for the same three intertwined reasons: to look older, more intellectual, and more attractive to young women. (Why young men persist in



believing that looking like an old intellectual is attractive to women surely remains one of life's unfathomable mysteries.) I still consider myself a relatively young pipe smoker, though in candid moments I admit that I careen recklessly toward middle age. I remain convinced that pipe smoking makes me seem older than what I convince myself are my rather boyish early — yes, early — middle years.

I remember my first "real" pipe and the elderly British gent who sold it to me. He surely knew more about the fine art of pipe smoking than I do now, or ever will. He taught me that I needed a large bowl so that the pipe would fit comfortably in my large hand. It was he who recommended the Danish Sovereign of handsomely polished briarwood I now proudly call my own. Expensive, but a small price to pay for a lifetime's worth of pleasure. He told me of the glories of briarwood — its hardness, its lightness, its heat resistance. And, of course, how it's capable of revealing, in the hands of a master pipe craftsman, the most lovely grains and patterns. He told me how to hold my pipe, how properly to tamp my tobacco. And he threw in a free tamper for the purpose. That same evening, I took my then fiancé (now wife) to the finest restaurant in town, at which time we commenced our celebration of the fact that however wretched the working world might be, we could always escape to our world. And we spoke too of my proud new possession.

I remember the times, good and bad, when my "trusted friend" and I would sit in splendid isolation and reflect on our misery or joy. Yet I recall also the occasions when pipe smoking was a communal experience. It is the early 1980s, the glory days of the Reagan Administration. My friends and I are sitting in a cruddy but wonderful bar in a tiny town in upstate New York. It is a bitterly cold December afternoon, yet we are unaware of the outside conditions as we celebrate our mutual victory over the first law school exams we ever wrote, puffing to our hearts' content, drinking Wild Turkey and beer as though we'd all been given a week to live. I still have the \$1 cornucopia I purchased specially for the occasion.

I remember too my father as he stood behind the glass counter of our general store. He was not a smoker (died early, nonetheless) but made certain exceptions. A notable one was during the seemingly endless hours he spent waiting on a boat in the frigid waters of the English Channel, in the dusk of June 5, 1944, not knowing whether life held 40 years or 40 hours. No pseudo-religious devotion there; only the real thing. Both he and I would relish the opportunity to smell the small packages of pipe tobacco he used to sell, for a pittance, to a world not yet chastened by health zealots or anti-smoking Nazis. I was four or five then, and

I knew little about the contents of these packets, but I wished they were edible.

Pipe smoking is nothing if not civilized. It is somehow fitting that both of nature's finest pipe materials — briar and meerschaum — come from the Mediterranean region. The peoples of this region today may be pitiful warriors, indolent workers, and economic have-nots. But their food, their lifestyle, their culture, their wantonness, all betoken an attitude toward life that us Northern types can, for the most part, only covet from afar.

When I practiced law, bored and miserable as a man can be, my pipe was an escape to the southern Europes of my mind (this before they banned smoking outright in my office). I could, occasionally, take a moment to look up from the drudgery of the multitudinous petty disputes with which I was dealing. With every respite I would carefully scrape any old tobacco from my pipe, scoop in the new, and tamp it gently but firmly into the bowl. Instantly, I was on a glorious beach in the Greek Isles, observing 21-year-old Italian models wearing virtually nothing, or less, reveling in the innocent decadence of the moment. Or I was back in Istanbul, standing on the banks of the Bosphorus, negotiating the price of an intricately carved meerschaum with a man named Mustafa.

Meerschaum is the perfect blend of magnesium, silica, and water. When properly polished, it is a beautiful stark white, like a Mediterranean beach house set against an azure sky. With age and many bowls of tobacco, it yellows gracefully as it renders its uniquely cool and dry smoke. It is a mineral that is produced in greatest quantity at the wonderful plain of Eskisehir in Turkey. In fact, I recall trekking through half of Turkey in search of this, perhaps the most perfect pipe. I walked in 100-degree heat through just about every back-alley bazaar in Istanbul, risking life and limb (I convinced myself) in search of the ideal. It was our honeymoon, and my wife gleefully accompanied me. I finally found my dream, carved in the form of a particularly diabolical-looking Sultan's head.

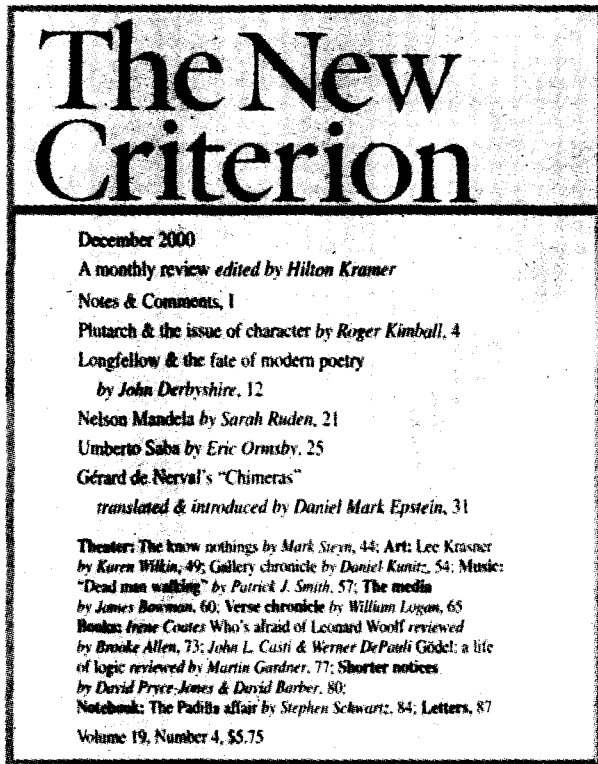
Today, in the academy, the workaday world fades in my consciousness and I can light up almost at will, as long as I go outside to do it and don't mind the quizzical looks of students and co-workers. Certainly a smoke, be it pipe, cigar, or cigarette, can be an academic's best friend. Nothing will get the creative juices flowing more readily, or better occupy one's hands and thoughts in those many moments of writers' block, than a little tobacco in any of its forms. The haze I sit in as I construct this essay is accentuated by a tall glass of tawny port: a natural complement. Rubbing the Sultan's head of my meerschaum, I conjure my genies from the phantasm of smoke. In more serious moods, I summon Plato, and he speaks to me through the mist of expired Cavendish. As he constructs his city in speech, so I stare heavenward, constructing mine in cotton-candy billows drifting idly to the ceiling.

But man cannot live by philosophy alone. I flip Sinatra onto the CD player and take slow draws from my Sultan. And I become supremely confident that I am doing things My Way. Or I stroll across a campus green, attracting the most violent looks from those who can't imagine that a man — particularly a relatively young man — would want to do such a thing. But I also see envy in the eyes of the men who wish they too could take up my blithesome habit, or that their bosses, wives, town councils, or health gurus would let them.

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